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ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Summary of Member Board Responses

"Our Education System: Its Future Responsibilities and Finance"

January, 1992

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In June, 1991, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association circulated its Discussion Guide "Our Education System: Its Future Responsibilities and Finance" to all its members for comment.

We would like to thank our members for their enthusiasm and active participation on this major OPSBA policy review.

This Summary Report has been produced with the assistance of:

- OPSBA member boards (see Appendix A)
- Felicity Corelli; Researcher and Writer
- Bev Allen, Director Legislation and Finance and Project Manager, OPSBA

Questions regarding content and future Association work can be directed to: Bev Allen, Director of Legislation and Finance, OPSBA.

I INTRODUCTION

In June, 1991, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association circulated to all its members the OPSBA Discussion Guide: Our Education System: Its Future Responsibilities and Finance. This resource document contained a set of draft principles for the future framework of our public education system; an examination of the current education system responsibilities with two broad questions: "Who are we responsible for?" and "What are we responsible for?" key issues and options to be considered regarding the future governance of education; and key issues and options on the future financing of our education system.

OPSBA in its discussion paper identified a variety of options for the future, to stimulate discussion amongst its membership, not as specific proposals for reform.

Approximately a third of our member public boards of education have responded to OPSBA, providing detailed and comprehensive input. These boards have provided a representative sampling of our members views on the future finance and role of locally elected public school boards in the delivery of education.

We are pleased to share the views of these boards with all member boards of OPSBA. Hopefully this will be a useful resource document to assist all public school boards in their participation in the second stage of this comprehensive policy review, the development of a draft OPSBA position paper on the responsibilities, finance, and governance of education.

This draft position paper will be circulated to the OPSBA membership for further input, in the fall of 1992.

The background documents, the OPSBA Discussion Guide, and this Summary of Member Board Response to the Discussion Guide, are also intended to assist members of the Association, with their direct participation in the Provincial Governments review of education finance; the Property Tax Working Group of the Fair Tax Commission; the Ministry of Education review of education finance; and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Steering Committee on Provincial-Local Relationships. They will be conducting public consultations during 1992.

As chair of the OPSBA Policy Committee I would like to thank our members for their enthusiastic support and valuable insights.

We will continue to keep you informed of our progress. If you require further information or assistance please do not hesitate to contact the Project Manager, Bev Allen, Director of Legislation and Finance, OPSBA.

Submitted By
Judy Corbishly, Chair, OPSBA Policy Committee

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

"OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM: ITS FUTURE RESPONSIBILITIES AND FINANCE"

SUMMARY OF MEMBER BOARD RESPONSES

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A Framework for the Future: Principles for Public Education

Summary of Member Responses to OPSBA Discussion Guide

II A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE: PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

This chapter proposed the formulation of a set of principles as the foundation for any future government partnership in the delivery and financing of education. The Guide described principles as "global philosophical statements or as statements developed through consensus which can direct education policy."

The draft principles put forward by OPSBA were:

- the mandate of public education
- partnership
- local autonomy
- equity
- accountability
- adequacy
- clarity

The Guide discussed each of these proposed principles and its implications individually.

The concept of a set of commonly accepted principles for public education received unanimous approval.

The majority of boards supported the principles as proposed in the Guide, although many had suggestions and comments. The Task Force on the Funding of Public Education (The Public School Boards of Metropolitan Toronto) was adamant that "the matters of local access to property tax resources, local autonomy and local accountability are principles upon which education must be based in order to provide education which will reflect the needs of the community."

The Waterloo Board of Education stressed the need for principles which would provide a "clearly articulated vision of the future and that is at once single or holistic, easily understood, clearly desirable and energizing", while the North Shore Board stated they should be imparted to the public in a more effective manner. The London Board agreed that principles should not only "be understood, but be accepted by the total community."

The Elgin County Board suggested in addition, standards of expectation in reading, problem solving and behaviour, improved public communication and the recognition of parents as primary educators. The Waterloo Board revised the principles as stated to read: mandate, responsibility - outcomes, partnership protocol, autonomy - provincial and local, equity of financial support, accountability, resource adequacy and provision, clarity - purpose and procedural." The London Board suggested that

"Accessibility" would be a more accurate term than "Mandate". The Northumberland and Newcastle Board suggested "the concept of disentanglement where accountability would be based more upon clarity of responsibilities."

The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board was also concerned that students should receive "a sound value base from which to learn, grow, develop."

Before a framework for effective operation and service would be possible, said the Central Algoma Board, each of the principles "must be clarified and developed through consultation."

MANDATE

With respect to the mandate of public education, the OPSBA discussion Guide noted the legal and social obligations of public education: that it must be non-discriminatory and must incorporate accountability, academic freedom, and equality of opportunity.

The difference between the public school mandate and those of other education systems particularly the separate school system, was of concern to some boards, raising suggestions that OPSBA should emphasize this point and that the government must view public boards in a different light. The Sault Ste. Marie Board maintained that the province must "recognize the impact that the public boards' far greater mandate with respect to the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has on the character, funding and delivery of public education." Central Algoma affirmed that public education "represents the social agenda for the Province of Ontario and Canada through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms" and, as such, "is a special trust which must be safeguarded since this is not available elsewhere."

The London Board stressed that "the full potential of each learner in the acquisition of academic, business and technological skills cannot be realized in isolation from his/her social, emotional and physical needs. The mandate of education is therefore to provide, <u>together with others</u>, an environment which will meet the academic, business, technological, social, emotional and physical needs of each learner."

Commenting that public boards receive most students with special needs, the Ottawa Board questioned why the provincial policy of deinstitutionalization was not backed by sufficient funding. The Victoria County Board also commented that public boards are required to provide programs for all children including students with disabilities and that frequently students with behavioral problems need one-to-one assistance.

Several boards questioned the precise meaning of "academic freedom" used in the Discussion Guide. The Middlesex County Board was concerned that a broad interpretation could lead to abuse or misuse. There should be clarification, said the Board, that "we are promoting responsibility along with the freedom." Observing that the term is commonly used by university faculty to denote the right to carry out research in areas of their own choosing, the Wellington Country Board called for a different term. The Durham Board interpreted it as the "absence of political pressure, direction or constraint in the pursuit of knowledge," while the Halton Board used "instilling a love of learning and respecting the diversity of all."

In this vein the Bruce County Board stated that public education should "provide for an equality of educational opportunity and access for all based on: excellence in education, a love of learning, respecting the diversity of all, encouraging creative alternatives and preparing students to participate in the democratic, economic, social and cultural life of the community." The Ottawa Board stressed equality of access to all, highlighting a student's right to seven years of free secondary education and the ramifications for adult education and lifelong learning. The Northumberland and Newcastle Board was concerned that the concept of lifelong learning could be hindered if the Education Act continued to make reference to "school-aged children".

The Kenora Board commented that the mandate of education is already sufficiently broad and that any further expansion could affect the ability to manage affairs effectively and efficiently. Its job should be to assist students to acquire skills for the 21st century.

Besides the traditional mandate, said the West Parry Sound Board, there are now "two overpowering educational objectives: the preservation of our planet and the establishment of an economic system that will maintain a lifestyle acceptable to Canadians."

It is complicated and difficult to get consensus on the purpose of schooling, said the Waterloo Board, quoting from Dr. M. Fullan's book, "The New Meaning of Education as Change":

(a) "to educate students in various academic or cognitive skills and knowledge (cognitive/academic) within an environment where there is equality of opportunity and the freedom to achieve and excel;"

(b) "to educate students in the development of individual and social skills and knowledge necessary to function occupationally and sociopolitically in society (personal/social development)."

PARTNERSHIP

> **"OPSBA supports the continuation of the governmental partnership in the delivery and financing of education, but with improvements to the intergovernmental relationship." (OPSBA Discussion Guide)**

The majority of boards supported this statement, viewing the first and major improvement necessary to be that the provincial government undertake "genuine consultation" with boards of education prior to final decision making, at the very least giving boards advance information of public announcements.

The Ottawa Board noted that consultation takes place on delivery issues but not on initial decisions. The Newcastle and Northumberland Board expected that "consultation would occur between the province and school boards prior to the introduction of new mandated programs and boards would have authority over which mandated programs were appropriate for their jurisdiction." The Durham board envisioned partnerships between boards and the provincial government, parents and constituent groups including business/industry, unions, other educational bodies such as local colleges, health services and social services. The London Board agreed there must also be opportunity for input by local communities and learners, suggesting that school boards use "strategic planning, consultation, effective and open communication with the public and the involvement of citizens on committees."

"The provincial government cannot continue to make unilateral decisions which directly affect our children and their education and their basic value set," said the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River Matheson Board. "Political motivations must not govern nor affect educational policy."

The Perth Board also suggested that consideration be given to the role of the Federal Government, "if any."

Recognizing the "legitimate right for involvement by different organizations, groups and individuals in the provision of public education", the Waterloo County Board observed that while government has the right to set policy even without agreement, consultation should take place prior to final decision making. Partnerships must also be invited and established at the local level, said the Board, including those between individual schools and the community. Central Algoma noted "a

dangerous tendency for the Province to legislate 'solutions' when a proper partnership would allow correction to be made locally without the legislative mandate being involved. With the diversity in social, economic and cultural aspects of this province, legislation actually causes more problems than it corrects, disenfranchises more than it franchises, and places social issues in the hands of the courts, the least likely location for satisfactory solution."

Other comments on improved partnerships included the Dryden Board's view that they must be based on mutual respect and the Wellington County Board's contention that the current partnership must be redefined so that the province and local boards are true partners with respect to both program and fiscal matters. Boards should not be considered subordinate to the Ministry of Education. The Wellington Board also suggested the strengthening of OPSBA's role as advocate to the provincial government.

LOCAL AUTONOMY

For the principle of local autonomy, OPSBA proposed: "As local governments, school boards must have the ability to act with a significant degree of independence in order to provide education that meets the needs of the community."

To the Oxford County Board this was the most important principle. Respondents agreed on the need to accommodate local circumstances, stressing the diversity of Ontario communities and the importance of community involvement in the education system. Many boards also called for the freedom to respond to local needs but within established provincial guidelines. The London Board described this as "local autonomy to establish additional programs, including staffing, within broad provincial parameters." The Board added that should the provincial government assume the collective bargaining function, "this should include salaries, benefits and pupil/teacher ratio."

Supporting the OPSBA statement in principle, the Northumberland and Newcastle Board expressed concern that if more provincial funding were limited to mandated programs, the diminished degree of independence would reduce local autonomy.

The Timiskaming Board stated that local autonomy is essential if education is to be accountable to local needs, noting that "mandates from Toronto frequently do not reflect the needs and concerns of small northern and rural communities" Similarly, the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board said that governing structures need not be the same but should be tailored to local conditions. "A governing structure which may be effective, efficient and economical in large metropolitan areas may not be suited to the circumstances in small Northern communities."

The emphasis on diversity across the province was echoed by the Wellington County Board who felt that local autonomy encourages more community involvement in education and allows for multiple delivery models. The North Shore Board called for more real community input and participation in the education process, while the Dryden Board stressed the importance of public understanding of the concept of local autonomy. "It also implies that boards must be held accountable, in a meaningful way, to the public."

The Kenora Board agreed that boards need sufficient financial and program independence to meet the needs of the community, but warned that a result of too much autonomy could be that diversity of programming across the province could affect equality of opportunity.

Noting differences between communities such as the urban/rural split, low or high population densities and relative wealth, the Waterloo Board added that "good management practice indicates that decisions made close to the actual situation are likely to be more realistic. Boards of education must live with the results of decisions, regardless of who made the decision, and consequences. Some portion of the provincial grant must be unconditional to allow boards to meet local needs."

The Timiskaming Board stressed the need for a two-way partnership - that boards must listen to the provincial government mandate, but that the government must respond constructively to local initiatives.

The Halton Board noted that if the province assumes more and more responsibility such as provincial bargaining, "one could question the need for local boards." Halton also raised the question of Canada-wide standards in relation to the local area. Halton commented that many families experience more than one system as they move about province or country, and stressed the need to refer to "the macrocosm that is education outside Ontario, as well the microcosm that is education at the local school level."

A question concerning the meaning of local autonomy to individual boards produced a variety of responses.

For the Waterloo Board of Education, local autonomy would mean "more authority for decision making with respect to what programs, what services and at what cost." The Board stated, however, that local autonomy without adequate provincial financial support remains problematic. Commenting that local boards have lost the financial flexibility to exercise local autonomy, the Lambton County Board noted "mandated social agendas" as a concern.

With respect to the role of school boards in establishing local education policies and curriculum, the Ottawa Board maintained that "we need strong provincial policies which can be interpreted by boards for implementation." The Board did not feel that pooling and redistribution by the province of commercial and industrial assessment would be consistent with the principle of local autonomy.

The Brant County Board agreed with this view, on the basis that local boards would no longer have the power to set commercial and industrial mill rates. The Board noted, however, that "pooling could have merit because it would increase resource and taxpayer equity." Brant County felt that the principle of local autonomy would still hold should the provincial government assume the responsibility for collective bargaining, although the method might require adjustment. The Board suggested that provincial negotiations could deal with salary remuneration, while local boards would remain responsible for negotiating items such as fringe items and staffing.

To the Dryden Board, local autonomy would mean that boards had the freedom to organize the system and schools to the benefit of local students. The Hastings County Board said that "educational objectives to be pursued and expectations for the measurement of successful learning should be province-wide, but boards must retain autonomy for delivery of programs and methods of communication with their publics." Hastings suggested a system whereby a core curriculum would be uniform across the province, the curriculum as delivery would be a local responsibility, and that the curriculum as learned should be provincially uniform for certain core objectives (Benchmarks) complemented by local assessment managed at the school level.

The Durham Board envisioned a situation which would "allow individual boards to respond to and provide for changing needs in their communities, e.g., rapid growth, E.S.L. (communities in need), special interest groups, industry and business priorities, social services, health needs. Durham also stressed the importance of "local dollars for local needs" - provincial government decisions should not require 100% local dollars to make up the shortfall resulting from centralized decision making in areas such as JK/K accommodation, computer studies, pay equity, health and safety."

Central Algoma stressed the need for "equality of opportunity to prepare students for the new economic order, competition, constant upgrading, etc." Partnerships between local boards and their communities would ensure acceptance of the necessary "central package of skills and curriculum" and enhance the process.

EQUITY

> **"The Guide considered three forms of equity: student, resource and taxpayer."**

Responses indicated that public boards of education view equity as an important and admirable principle which may not, however, be fully attainable. Equity is "very idealistic. It is certainly unrealistic in terms of our present resources and some trustees wonder if it isn't too utopian even to consider."

Geographical differences were cited as a major consideration. The West Parry Sound Board emphasized the "vast differences in offering equality of educational opportunity between populated southern Ontario communities with their sophisticated commercial and industrial empires and isolated, rural boards in most Northern Ontario communities with single resource or tourist based economies." The North Shore Board stated its belief that complete equity is unrealistic given the geography of the province, but at the same time called for equal access to a minimum curriculum.

1. Student equity

Almost all responding boards agreed with OPSBA'S statement concerning the meaning of student equity:

> **"Every learner (child and adult) in Ontario should have an even chance regardless of socio-economic status, or regardless of where he or she lives. This would be called "equality of educational opportunity".**

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board proposed amending the statement to read: "Every learner (child and adult) in Ontario should have <u>an equal chance of having the same access to programs and resources in order to develop their learning capabilities</u>. This would be called 'equality of educational opportunity'."

The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board added that each learner should have access to education programs to suit his or her needs and that are of similar high quality from one school to another. The Middlesex Board agreed that there must be a minimum standard of learning environment for every student but felt that, beyond that, equity might difficult to achieve.

"Let each board do its best for each student," said the Oxford County Board. The Board suggested that equity of opportunity would be fairer to boards than equity of outcome, observing that "boards are not responsible for the circumstances in which people find themselves, or in which they choose to place themselves."

The Atikokan Board stressed equity "in the sense that even students in smaller schools should enjoy some fairness in the options available to them as compared with other Ontario students." The Board noted trustees' desire for assurance that "pupils are meeting expectations or standards advocated by the province . . . that quality education is being provided, particularly in the traditional core programs."

To the Durham Board, student equity meant that all students across the province would be on an even footing regarding the quality of teaching, resources and opportunities. The London Board added that social/health services are needed to provide a suitable learning environment for students; they can be offered effectively in the school setting but must be funded and delivered by other agencies.

Several boards cautioned against "sameness." Observing that each student must have equal opportunity to develop to the best of his or her ability, the Wellington County Board stressed that this does not imply uniformity of outcome and must not be misinterpreted as uniformity of opportunity. The Lambton County Board noted the need for "programs of the same quality, not necessarily the same program."

A philosophy of sameness in programs, services and costs is "in opposition to local autonomy and the ability of individual communities responding to unique circumstances and needs," said the Waterloo Board. "It will be necessary to address this issue with finances in mind, but there should be some specifics for all students regardless of cost."

Other views of student equity included:

- the application of resources in a differential manner to help students overcome the barriers to learning that they face as individuals (Kenora)

- equal opportunity to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and values to be a successful, contributing member of society - regardless of socio-economic status, race, culture, religion (Hastings)

- a fair opportunity for a basic education; reward on the basis of merit in fair competition; same access and opportunity to learn the basics of education (Elgin County Board and collated comments from different respondents)

2. Resource equity

> **"Every school board in Ontario should have sufficient resources to provide for equality of education opportunity for every student."**

OPSBA's proposal for the principle of resource equity received strong support from most boards, although there were reservations about funding implications.

Middlesex County agreed with the notion in principle, which would permit coterminous boards to provide equality of opportunity, but questioned whether the expense would be prohibitive. Recognizing the desirability of resource equity, the London Board observed that if implemented, London would probably lose some of its resources to other less fortunate boards.

Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson commented that any funding model must be structured so that a board may select and put in place an education program suited to local needs without sacrificing its right to sufficient provincial resources. "Local issues and circumstances must become an integral part of the general funding model."

Waterloo County stressed that every school board - large or small, rich or poor - should have sufficient resources to provide a basic or core program. "The challenge is to define what is basic in terms of programs and services." Wellington County looked for "some system of resource distribution, e.g., current variable grant rates to ensure that rural and isolate boards can provide equality of educational opportunity."

The Timiskaming Board felt resource equity should mean equal access to good level of education as established by a core curriculum, with opportunity for some local variation. Timiskaming noted that the current financial situation allows no expansion of program and is stressed by mandated programs and the negative impact of many economies. The board's elementary schools do not have technical or family studies programs and have little guidance or librarian time. There is little curriculum development or inservice for new mandates such as computers.

The Elgin County Board called for sufficient finances to provide the resources "necessary to provide equality in teaching . . . this means provincial funding at 75% - mandatory programs at 100%." Oxford County cited "access to good people to provide the best education possible," adding that "in each community, choices must be made and options used to the best advantage."

To the Dryden Board, resource equity would mean sufficient resources available to schools, students and boards, in order that equal opportunity for every student to reach their full potential is provided. Central Algoma also looked for "special support services for students to ensure development." The Board is the "only agency which represents the whole of Central Algoma" and must therefore assist, coordinate and in many cases pay for social/ health services, to which access for many students is otherwise impossible.

Other views of resource equity included:

- adequate funds and equipment, adequate resource people such as psychologists, therapists, specialists, consultants locally available (Timiskaming);

- necessary resources to achieve student equity as defined above; certainly more than the board has at its disposal currently. This has serious implications in the tax climate. (Kenora);

- sufficient resources to provide for equality of opportunity for every student to attain the essential knowledge, skills and values of a core curriculum. Increasing number of prescribed areas have not been matched by funding increases (Hastings County);

- meeting the needs of the individual school community, for example, Special Education services (Durham).

3. Taxpayer Equity

> **"Within a school board boundary the individual ratepayer should pay the same amount of education taxes as his or her neighbour for a property of similar value." (OPSBA Discussion Guide)**

Responding boards generally agreed with OPSBA'S statement, noting that this is not the current situation. County boards made up of several municipalities were particularly concerned at variances.

Hastings County commented on inadequacies within the local jurisdiction due to the lack of county-wide assessment, and at the provincial level from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The Brant County Board proposed consideration of taxpayer equity on a province-wide basis. The Kenora

Board supported this view, on the basis that it is not sufficient to define taxpayer equity in terms of taxes on properties of similar value within a school board boundary. "If two school boards in different areas of the province with different levels of assessment wealth both implement the same program, it should result in the same tax impact on properties of similar value anywhere in either board's jurisdiction."

On a system of full market value assessment, the Central Algoma Board noted that unless standardized across the province, this process "does inflate the relative worth of our board in comparison to other boards who are on outdated or differing systems of market appreciation."

Waterloo County identified three major issues:

- the individual ratepayer should be treated equally with respect to educational taxation;
- education is a societal responsibility; all shareholders have a responsibility for financing education and the method of financing must be both fair and equitable;
- the equity question must not be allowed to overshadow the issue of available financial resources and the public's ability to pay for programs and services. Ratepayers are less concerned with how education is being funded than with its cost and our ability to afford it.

The London Board added the words " . . . based on the assumption that funds raised this way would be for local use" to the OPSBA definition. London suggested that funds could be raised through income tax for provincial grants. Observing that "the current method of tax pooling clearly identifies the education portion of the tax and the municipality ensures that this tax is visible," the Board felt that "a dual taxation process would lead to extra work, additional costs and taxpayer aggravation. Changing the fiscal year would be more beneficial."

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt that "taxpayer fairness goes beyond the education system but must be an objective of it, and property tax is an unfair basis for educational funding."

Several boards questioned the continued use of property taxes as the base for education funding. According to the Durham Board, "Services to property should be paid by property taxes. Services to people should be paid through income taxes with an 'ability to pay' component."

Lambton County also preferred income tax as a funding source for education but suggested that if the assessment base were distributed across the province on a per pupil basis, it appeared that most boards would benefit.

"If education is to continue to be dependent on the property tax base, the whole area of market value assessment and assessment equalization factors must be reviewed," said the Wellington County Board. Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson agreed that, under the current system, inequities in the base must be addressed but that it would be "better to investigate new, innovative funding methods and models to ensure that taxpayer equity is truly evident in the educational funding base." The Ottawa Board found it unlikely that the four-year equalization factor would be an accurate measurement of local government's ability to pay.

The Prescott-Russell Board expressed an additional concern that a coterminous board with a lower tax rate might attract more ratepayers to the detriment of the other board.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Guide suggested three levels of accountability, all essential for excellence in education: political accountability, management/financial, and education system accountability.

Responding boards agreed with this concept, but presented a variety of views of what real accountability means at each level and how it can be measured. However, there was general agreement that clarification of the respective roles of the provincial government and boards of education would be of assistance.

The London Board added two additional levels of accountability: Learner and Parental, commenting that, "Parents have accountability as the child's first teacher; a student bears some responsibility for his/her own learning."

1. Political Accountability

Political accountability appeared the most easily determined. Boards agreed that the public judges their performance through the democratic process. Waterloo County noted that schools are accountable to the public, but trustees are also responsible to government as spelled out in various acts, regulations, policy statements and directives. "If trustees are accountable to the provincial government in the provision of educational programs and services, then the government has a responsibility to provide them with the necessary resources to do the job."

Other interpretations of political accountability included:

- striking a balance between policies of the government and the demands and needs of the local community (Brant County)

- being accountable to constituents in the jurisdiction for educational outcomes as they affect students (Dryden)

- being responsive to diverse interests in the community - balance between needs of pupils, staff, parents, business people, retirees, ratepayers etc. (Kenora)

Noting that the direct collection of local revenue for education would be possible given current computer technology, the Ottawa Board felt that "a separate tax bill would also focus the ratepayer on education and, therefore, demand more accountability by boards."
On the whole, however, here was little support for the concept of direct collection of education property tax on the basis that it would contribute further to bureaucracy.

The London Board noted that school councils would not improve political accountability, which it viewed as "the responsibility of elected officials to their constituents for program quality in the community, the policies regulating the types of education programs and the level of service that responds to local needs." London also stressed the requirement for public understanding of the responsibilities, roles and functions of their representatives, and for ongoing communications with the public. Similarly, said the Halton Board, locally elected school councils would lead to excessive fragmentation, as already exists in areas with four different school boards.

The Perth County Board, however, suggested that "a structure of local advisory boards may provide better feedback." Perth added that political accountability over three years is too long, while Ottawa called for efforts to encourage greater turnout at municipal elections.

The Durham Board identified the following major aspects of political accountability:

- trustees seek public input on major issues and money matters
- constituents make their views known
- using good judgment when making decisions, sometimes with public input
- informing/educating the public concerning issues
- elected officials are financially responsible for the decisions they make

2. Management/Financial Accountability

The Brant County Board suggested that OPSBA's definition be expanded to read: "School board administrators are accountable to the board and the Minister in ensuring that resources are used appropriately to meet the goals, objectives, and board policies for the effective delivery of education in the community."

Several boards stated they were already meeting the requirement for financial accountability as best they could, but questioned provincial accountability. Central Algoma referred to "continual demands on boards which are not supported by related funding."

Kenora noted that the existing level of financial accountability "already exceeds that which flows from the minimal amount of local control over curriculum and program. As a considerable portion of funds comes from the local ratepayer, the level must be maintained." The Board also suggested that new uses of information technology increase trustee access to financial affairs, allowing them to be more responsive to demands for financial accountability.

Recognizing that each elected board, along with its administration, must be accountable for ensuring that resources are used appropriately in the delivery of effective programs and services, the Waterloo County Board stressed that "accountability must be a partnership arrangement with the province which controls approximately 80% of the funds. Local financial accountability must be accompanied by the authority to make decisions regarding what programs, what services and therefore, what costs."

To the Oxford County Board, financial accountability was second in importance only to the principle of local autonomy. The Board associated financial accountability with more efficiency.

The Durham Board listed several actions to achieve management/financial accountability that included: greater trustee involvement in budget determination; monthly financial reports; Budget Audit Committees and independent auditors; detailed financial implications in all reports; precise accounting practices in place (checks and balances); policies and procedures in place to ensure accountability, and long-range plans for the Board's operations. Among results derived from these actions are:

- financial compatibility with long term goals;
- perceived fairness/equity in all parts of Board's jurisdiction;
- public access to budget process; reassurance for trustees;
- calmness and trust/morale, and good working relationships.

Wellington County observed that trustees should be closely involved in setting budgets and in scrutinizing and controlling budget variances, but not in day-to-day financial management.

3. Education system accountability

The concept of education system accountability was one of the more elusive. The Wellington County Board suggested a more specific statement that both the province and local school boards are accountable for the standard of education provided by publicly funded schools. The Ottawa Board pointed out a direct connection between the way representation on a school board is determined and how education is delivered by the local board. Ottawa also proposed international standards for testing.

The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board called for a level of accountability consistent with each level of government's decision making power - "Local boards cannot be held completely responsible for the entire education system unless they have complete power to determine its course in their local community."

"Parents and ratepayers have difficulty understanding what children are supposed to be learning and whether they are doing so", said the Grey County Board, calling for a clear statement of learning opportunities and expected learning outcomes which every student in Ontario should experience - a well defined Foundation Level for Ontario Education, enhanced by an appropriately 'Foundation Plus' Level suited to local need and condition. "All educators deserve the right, privilege and responsibility to demonstrate effective use of available resources (people, material, dollars) to produce necessary competence."

The Brant County Board stressed the importance of the statement, "Such accountability requires that the public understand the responsibilities, roles and functions of their representatives."

ADEQUACY

Asked whether elementary and secondary education is funded in each community to meet the needs, the negative response from boards was almost unanimous.

Commenting that more than 95% of Ontario school boards exceeded recognized Ministry of Education expenditure ceilings, the Waterloo County Board observed that the ceilings were clearly neither adequate nor realistic. The Board stressed the need to define "adequate" and, through consultation, to "clearly identify an achievable set of educational goals and priorities which are realistic in terms of affordability." Also citing unrealistic grant ceilings, the Middlesex County Board described adequacy of funding as the "very thing that dictates equity of opportunity."

Wellington County also raised the question of clarity of goals and whether the provincial government and school boards can realistically address all the perceived goals and needs.

As needs expand to meet the amount available, "it is impossible to say what would be adequate," said the Oxford County Board, noting that it has been forced to cut programming. Durham agreed that there will never be a shortage of needs, citing the provincial/ local share of funding as the main problem. "Are dollars now being used wisely?" asked the Board. "Directing money at an issue does not solve the problem." Hastings County stated that recent budgets have required significantly greater increase in revenue from property taxes than is provided through grants.

Referring to inadequate funding for elementary schools, the North Shore Board called for parity between the two panels. Timiskaming said that funding was currently so inadequate as to necessitate programs cuts - the Board had cut all technical or family studies programs in elementary schools.

The difference in elementary and secondary ceiling support was also a "mystery" to the Central Algoma Board who observed that "salaries - 80 percent of our budget - are parallel, and other types of expenditure required for the secondary level are in other parts of the grants process" such as capital grants. In addition, the Board said, emphasis on class sizes and the movement away from a textbook-centred approach make resource costs very similar for both levels.

Only two respondents felt that funding was adequate, though from different perspectives. An individual response from Elgin County said "Yes, to excess," although another disagreed. The Kenora Board said yes, but with the observation that too much was coming from the local taxpayer. Fortunately, said Kenora, there is a reasonably large local property tax base and the "inadequacy of provincial funding has been offset by higher local contributions that are spread evenly over our local tax base".

Asked what would be adequate, responses ranged from "resource equity between coterminous boards" (Prescott-Russell) to "provision of funding at a level to meet provincially initiated programs and legislation as well as local objectives with respect to educational programming and special initiatives" (Dryden). Brant County stated, "Equality of educational opportunity for all learners province-wide, with equality of access --." Atikokan highlighted "core programming, plus some enrichments, plus all costs related to special education initiatives and other Ministry initiatives."

Durham commented that funding would be adequate if social services were funded on a demographic basis, taking into consideration such things as income levels, employment status and family structure.

The general feeling was that adequate funding could only be determined once it was agreed what should be funded. "Adequate means having the necessary resources to address the prescribed mandate," said the Waterloo County Board. "We must first agree on what we want to do in terms of purpose, goals, expectations and outcomes, then determine in minimum terms what resources are necessary. The present prescribed mandate may be too ambitious, cloudy or non-existent." London suggested that funding should be based on actual costs of program delivery, to meet costs of programs and services which would fulfill local needs and provide each learner with equal educational opportunity.

The Perth County Board was concerned that inadequate funding results from items mandated without financial support. West Parry Sound echoed this concern stating that such initiatives "must be supported by resources for curriculum development, implementation and staff training. Small Boards are generally resource poor and would benefit from Ministry incentives which would encourage a sharing of resources among boards."

Hastings County identified two necessary actions: a return to a more appropriate balance between revenue from grants and local taxation, and a direct connection between funding through grants and Ministry-prescribed additional expectations - the "expanded public education agenda must be matched with adequate provincial resources." Other responses suggested a return to a 60% provincial share, if the current funding model is retained, to reflect fairly the ratio of decision making power (Kenora) or a 75% provincial/ 25% local split with mandatory programs funded 100% by the province (Elgin County).

CLARITY

The need for more clarity was evident in every response.

It should be the first priority, said Waterloo County, citing the mandate of the school system as an example. Other areas identified for clarification included principles, responsibilities (specifically in areas such as psychological support services, child care, adult education) and goals, the complexity of the current elementary and secondary system, education financing, and Ministry guidelines.

The Brant County Board felt that clarity was not a philosophical principle of the education system - "it is a need". The Board proposed removing it from the principles but including it as a part of every other section.

The Education Act is particularly in need of a comprehensive review according to most boards. Wellington County stressed that such a review must include extensive consultation with locally elected school boards and their provincial OPSBA representatives. There was also a suggestion that the Act be reviewed for inconsistencies with other provincial or federal legislation. The London Board, however, called for "action and a new Education Act ... not another legislative review." The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt that clarity required "disentanglement of existing relationships first, rather than a completely rewritten Education Act."

The Atikokan Board suggested "clarification of the partnership role between the Ministry and boards of education", and also called for a period of stabilization.

The Kenora Board cautioned that clarity should not be achieved at the expense of the fairness the current funding model intends to promote. The model has grown in complexity over the years as modifications addressed individual board circumstances. "It is important to distinguish between complexity and clarity. The Ministry has made some improvements in the past couple of years to the general legislative grant package which improved its clarity. These did not change the structure or complexity of the model, but instead made it more understandable for the casual reader." Kenora hoped that greater clarity would lead to greater understanding by all parties of "how educational programming decisions are translated into mill rate impacts."

Noting that program services, initiatives and policies are all tied to the funding base, the Central Algoma Board suggested that the Education Act should be rewritten to "link policy with a more comprehensive education finance system." The Board envisioned a process which would "clarify financial responsibilities, define mandates, roles and responsibilities for each level, improve political accountability and streamline the consultation, accessibility and administrative processes."

OTHER PRINCIPLES

Several boards identified additional principles of importance. These included:

- dollars raised locally should be spent locally; and those who make decisions should be responsible for funding those programs (Durham);
- provincial autonomy, outcome or performance expectations and planned change process (Waterloo);
- substitute "student equity" with "equality of educational opportunity" (Kenora);

Responsibilities of Our Education System

Summary of Member Responses to OPSBA Discussion Guide

- moral responsibility and basic truth; and better communication and openness with the public (Elgin County);

- moral principles; co-operation among the partners in education (North Shore);

- mutual respect: ministry, board, employees, parents, students (Timiskaming);

- openness (London);

- disentanglement (Northumberland and Newcastle).

The Atikokan Board felt strongly that there should be a "common standard of program available throughout the province, such that no students can be deemed to have a second rate education in comparison to pupils in richer communities." Atikokan was also concerned about the quality of student evaluation, and that "70 percent means 70 percent across the province."

The Wellington County Board suggested that as the primary role of school boards should be to continue to provide elementary and secondary education to the local community, the principles should make reference to the "obligation to equip students with basic literacy and numeracy skills."

Asked to rank the proposed principles and any others that might be added, most boards felt they were of equal importance. The Durham Board, however, identified defining the mandate as the first priority. Oxford County placed local autonomy at the top of the list, followed by financial accountability. The Kenora Board highlighted "equality of educational opportunity, on which the present funding model is based," adding that, unfortunately, "the internal mechanisms in the funding model are too far out of adjustment for the model to work properly."

III THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

This chapter examined current education system responsibilities, the process by which these evolved, and what the future responsibilities of the system should be. The Guide addressed two broad questions: Who are we responsible for? and, What are we responsible for? Three general issues were identified: the expanding responsibilities of the education system in terms of education, social and health programs; the expanding responsibilities of the education system terms of who is being served; and the lack of a clear understanding of the scope of the educative role of school boards. Also considered were the relative roles of the province and school boards in determining responsibilities, and the unique mandate of the public school system.

The establishment of "goals" for education was considered beyond the scope of the discussion paper, although there were several questions related to goals which would have an impact on both governance and finance decision making.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board wanted clarification of the term "responsibility" on the basis that in some cases it could refer to the "product/service, i.e. education, and, in other cases, only the facilities in which the service/product may be delivered, i.e. day care." As a general statement, the Board proposed: "to provide education instruction (including skills training component) for all those qualified to attend." Some additional responsibilities could be:

- Focal point for the community;
- Primary contact agency for families;
- Central resource for information regarding other community resources;
- All educational issues for all age groups as central coordinator, i.e., child/adult learner, ESL and well-being;
- Major liaison organization for the family.

The Halton Board agreed that there has been an "ad hoc" expansion of school board responsibilities, and that a thorough analysis is overdue. Waterloo called for a clearly established provincial agenda describing the purpose of schooling, an identified core curriculum, intended outcomes, evaluation process, and planned change process, which would address responsibilities such as the age to start school, child care, health services, adult education, social services. This agenda, said the Board, should be developed through a broadly based consultation process, noting that "Education should be a team effort with other agencies."

The majority of boards viewed school board responsibilities in terms of both cognitive, personal and social development. Responses ranged from the general to the specific, addressing such issues as learner age groups, parental involvement and programs for exceptional students. There were frequent references to lifelong learning, developing a love of learning, and meeting the needs of individual students.

Respondents generally accepted the school as the most appropriate setting for children's services beyond the immediate educative function, but did not feel that the education system should be responsible for funding these services.

The primary responsibility, according to the Dryden Board, should be the delivery of primary, secondary and continuing education. "Learning should be a lifelong experience 'from the womb to the tomb'." Atikokan stressed as the principal responsibility the "traditional role of meeting the educational needs of students from JK to OAC who are preparing for employment, college or university." The Board had no objection to taking on ancillary services "provided greater inter-ministry cooperation and support can be achieved, along with adequate funding."

Brant County included "required programs which school boards must provide under legislation, and for which the Ministry allocates funds." Discretionary programs, said the Board, could be provided by the local educational system according to identified needs of the community and the availability of resources.

The Perth County Board agreed that the responsibilities of the education system should be educative. The Board noted that the school setting is the best place to deliver a broader base of services but maintained that funding should still be the responsibility of various ministries of the provincial government. "Skills required should be for living, learning and earning. 'One stop shopping for kids' should not be clouded by funding issues."

"The education system should act as the "Hub" providing a myriad of services but with funding coming from other systems," said the Durham Board. Schools should provide services to meet the needs of the learner, the needs of a changing, technologically-oriented society, and the social conditions of students.

The Victoria County Board stated that school boards are responsible for the education of people from JK to the OAC level, as well as limited health and social issues. What we want from our education system, the Board said, is "the desire to keep on learning; the ability to stand 'on our own two feet'; the need to do more for ourselves; and the ability to be productive and creative."

The Prescott-Russell Board described the education system responsibilities as: to stimulate a love of learning and learning how to learn; to help each student to develop self-responsibility, resourcefulness and the ability to cooperate with others; to help its clients build on "failure" and to turn mistakes into successes; to help students recognize excellence and reach for it; and to provide a caring environment within which people can grow. Bruce County added that students need to "overcome the fear of learning and to view life and learning as synonymous," which would encourage assimilation of adult education in the daily school operation.

The Wellington County Board observed that "there appears to be an assumption that we can all agree that the education system exists, at its most basic level, to provide a foundation for lifelong learning by nurturing the cognitive, emotional and physical potential for development in all children who enter the system. This nurturing, we believe, should be implemented through the provision of a curriculum which extends from JK to OAC and includes adults for basic education and children with special needs." The Ottawa Board also stressed the educational rights of adults.

The Timiskaming Board included "literacy, numeracy, core curriculum, and all enrichment possible, delivered in a healthy mental and physical environment for each individual from JK to OSSD."

A suggestion that school board responsibilities should be addressed in conjunction with parental and family responsibilities came from the Elgin County Board. The Board also identified skills for living, provision of learning and instruction from JK to OAC in clean healthy surroundings instruction for adult learners, and programs for exceptional students.

The Oxford County Board noted the lack of public consensus on the role of the school with respect to mandatory, voluntary or discretionary programming. Respondents considered whether the responsibility of the local school system should be limited to the provision of education based on clearly defined goals and curriculum. Boards addressed this question in terms of both school program and services that were not strictly educational. The Victoria County Board viewed the primary focus as to "produce capable, knowledgeable people." The province should mandate a core curriculum, but there should be flexibility of courses and boards should be able to choose how to reach the goals.

There was general agreement, however, with the Timiskaming Board view that responsibilities of the school system "include helping children with problems that interfere with their education." Noting that it is "not possible to turn back clock to a narrower view of educational responsibility" the Halton Board described the local school as the "one constant anywhere" and, with proper funding and effective coordination, the best place for delivery of services.

The Wellington Board also observed that it is "difficult to place limits or to narrow goals and curriculum in the face of local needs and the provincial government's tendency to expand our mandate."

Commenting that "the primary purpose of education is to educate," the Durham Board proposed that other services needed to enhance learning should be funded and provided in an integrated way by other systems. The Waterloo County Board suggested that respective responsibilities should be determined in conjunction with other partners such as the Ministries of Health, Community and Social Services and Colleges and Universities. This would require consultation and recognition of community expectations. The London Board felt that school boards should be partners with other agencies in the provision and delivery of ancillary services.

EDUCATIVE SERVICES

With regard to their educative responsibility and whom they should serve, most boards shared the opinion that school boards should provide programs to the end of secondary school for all those who wanted it.

"Boards have an obligation to provide for all learners," said the North Shore Board, adding that the education system should serve everyone from beginning school age until they have earned a graduation diploma. Similarly, the Timiskaming Board responded, "learners of all ages who have not completed either their Ontario Secondary School Diploma or any individual credits that will teach additional skills or job retraining." The Oxford County Board identified "Kindergarten to OAC mandatory" adding that adult education was highly regarded and should be available according to need and ability to pay.

Several boards stressed this commitment to lifelong learning, including the Dryden Board, who replied that boards should serve "the public 'from the womb to the tomb'." The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board said that boards should "take an active role in lifelong learning providing elementary, secondary and continuing education opportunities to adults, also day care services - where warranted, if such programs are adequately funded."

The Waterloo County Board maintained that the education system should serve "children and adults requiring an elementary and secondary school education. School attendance is mandatory for children within a certain age range," the Board observed, adding that "adults, who have not attained their secondary school diploma or who need academic upgrading, should have the right of easy, systematic and appropriate access to school attendance (day or evening programs)."

The Durham Board specified students 4 - 21 years of age (to completion of Secondary Diploma) and the encouragement of lifelong learning through provision of special interest courses and secondary credit courses. The Wellington County Board recommended "a curriculum which extends from JK to OAC and includes adults for basic education and children with special needs." The Central Algoma Board suggested that boards should be involved in the basic skills component of education for all levels in society.

Brant County proposed "the broad community according to its ever-changing educational needs, including those desiring continuing education in the community, such as, retraining, credit programs, general interest courses."

Individual responses from the Elgin County Board maintained that although the priority should be "basic education skills the first time through," the education system should be available to "every child, all adult learners, exceptional pupils" and "all who want to use it."

Victoria County suggested JK to OAC with optional attendance to age 6. Commenting that schools "cannot be all things to all people", the Board proposed determining the skills needed in the community and addressing those needs. The London Board agreed that "provision of education to 4 and 5-year olds should continue to be optional."

The Prescott-Russell County Board had one reservation: "the possible exception of extremely specialized special needs students whose numbers are so small that the service would be prohibitively expensive for one board and who can benefit from being with similar peers." The Halton Board included programs for some adults such as continuing education credit courses and ESL, and for children with special needs, but expressed hesitancy about serving hard-to-serve pupils over the age of 21, such as those with Down Syndrome. Such pupils, the Board felt, should be under the auspices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, but "with coordination between ministries, it should be possible to offer accommodation and cooperation." The Board added that there should be more effective ways to serve adults with disabilities than "what amounts to very expensive custodial care in the school system."

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Boards held mixed opinions regarding what, if any, ancillary services such as childcare and health services school boards should take on. Schools should provide "any service which relates to the student as learner," said the Durham Board. "Whatever we can to help the child, with funding and cooperation from appropriate ministries," responded the Timiskaming Board.

Timiskaming added that, "Our system at present is trying to meet student needs that are well outside the mandate of education but which are required if the children are to be equipped for learning and for life. We recognize the 'captive' audience that mandatory schooling requires and that it is an effective delivery access point. On the other hand, the hours for education are encroached upon and the demands are placing an unacceptable strain on education finance. The other ministries who wish to access and assist our students need to supply personnel (nurses who nurse, social workers who are available) and dollars to implement services."

Recognizing that "children cannot learn if they are hungry or have psychological needs", the Victoria County Board suggested that boards should address children's problems in order that they can be productive. However, said the Board, other ministries should not "download" to boards of education, and community organizations might also assume some of the responsibilities.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board observed that while school boards' responsibility should be confined to providing quality education to all of its "citizens" (students), "this is impossible without regard to the other needs of the learner" in areas such as health and welfare. The Board suggested a unified Children's Services Authority as one way to provide the necessary school-based services.

While some boards felt more strongly than others that the school is a convenient and appropriate location for service delivery, **all were in agreement that the education system should not bear the financial responsibility for non-educational services.** Ancillary services such as child care, health care and social services are necessary and should be available to all learners," said the London Board, adding that funding and provision of the services should be the responsibility of the agencies concerned, using school facilities where applicable. Oxford County stated that boards should not take on any services that are not fully funded.

The Wellington County Board noted the "distinction between ancillary services that have immediate, direct and effective influence on the nurturing process . . . e.g., personal counselling, crisis intervention and, on the other hand, those services which are clearly the mandate of other provincial government funded services" and for which boards are "taking up the slack."

The Waterloo Board identified funding as the major problem. Priorities must be set with the province and responsibilities defined. For example, asked the Board, should schools be responsible for such services as hiring psychiatrists or should they be available through community based health and/or social support systems? "The question is not so much what ancillary

services should school boards take on," said the Board, "but, rather 'What are the priorities given limited resources?' 'What services or programs may have to be reduced or eliminated altogether?' 'Who is responsible for paying for what programs and services?'"

Similarly, the Carleton Board was concerned that "forcing boards to undertake responsibilities outside education dilutes resources that should be concentrated on the primary mission." With adequate provincial funding of child related health and welfare, for example, "schools would not have to provide psychological services for students, leaving more money for the classroom."

Along with funding issues, the need for partnership and co-ordination was highlighted. The North Shore Board suggested the school should be the catalyst and focal point for ancillary services. "We should be in partnership with the service providers." This was echoed by the Halton Board's statement that while the school is best place to deliver additional health and social service responsibilities, other ministries should be responsible for provision of such services. In the absence of any coordination, said the Board, often, "through default, the school board has assumed a lead role in this but it is paramount that coordination become effective and all ministries must work together on this."

The Hastings County Board agreed that schools were good locations for the provision of child care and health care services but stressed that these services must be funded through "universal taxation processes managed by the provincial government" and not through local revenues. The Dryden Board considered the possibility of being "hosts" or providing space if available, but did not feel that schools should be responsible for other services.

The West Parry Sound Board noted that in Northern Ontario the school board is frequently "the principal government agency sponsoring social or educational services for citizens living in dozens of independent municipalities. Child care, before and after school services, adult education, recreation, music lessons, need numbers to survive but there are few comprehensive funding organizations other than school boards operating on shared assessment formulae." The Board recognized the significant role of these services in nurturing children, but felt they should be identified as social services rather than educational.

OPSBA Preliminary Classification: Educative, Social, Health

Most boards felt that OPSBA's preliminary list classifying educative, social and health responsibilities provided an accurate overall reflection of what school boards are currently doing.

However, as the Durham Board noted, "No list does," and boards identified a range of additional responsibilities. These included:

- responsibility for co-ordination of services (Halton)
- apprenticeship and adult education programs (Timiskaming)
- headstart summer programs, audiological services, psychological assessments and the repair and maintenance of specialized equipment (e.g., hearing aid devices, phonic ears etc.) (Waterloo County)
- life skills/values clarification, co-operative education, plus emotional care and educational correctional services in cooperation with appropriate ministries (West Parry Sound)
- administration responsibilities: ever expanding task of administering employee benefits, preparation of reports, keeping track of Ministry requirements (Prescott-Russell)
- quasi-judicial services - SALEP, Attendance (Durham)
- under educative, home schooling, under health, dental services (Middlesex County)
- under social services, Family Violence initiative (Central Algoma)
- under education, academic counselling, suicide prevention programs, sex abuse prevention programs, violence prevention programs; under health, services - hearing/vision testing, psychiatric testing, speech and language diagnosis (London)
- summer school, Early and Ongoing Identification, heritage language, administration of medication, SWAP (Brant County)
- environmental education, e.g., conservation, outdoor education; family and personal values development (Atikokan)

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt the list was adequate with the inclusion of skills training under education.

The Middlesex County Board also said that while "all listed services may be essential to a student's well-being and may have an impact on academic achievement" and although schools may be the best place to offer services, boards should be responsible only for items listed under education. Others should be the responsibility of and funded by appropriate ministries." One of the advantages of public education, said the Board, is its accessibility to all - other ministries should be the same and be prepared to work with school boards to provide adequate services.

The Hastings County Board agreed that there are many areas of service beyond the education mandate that schools can provide effectively, but that funding must come from other ministries to support social programs, adult retraining and health care programs.

Proposing that children's services should be integrated into a single delivery service, the Central Algoma Board envisioned the school as "instrumental in identifying problems and coordinating the various services to arrange for appropriate action." Currently, the Board said, "the overlap in service in some areas and the huge gaps left in others make this an untenable situation."

The Halton Board queried whether "parent education" should be described as "parenting education" (another suggestion was "parenting skills") and whether "early childhood education" meant day care, in which case, it should be listed under social services. Noting that "recreation" appeared under both education and social services, the Board suggested that under education, all bullets from recreation on, including arts, life skills, drug education etc., be collated under the heading "curriculum".

With reference to health and social services responsibilities listed, Halton felt that some flexibility was necessary as delivery would vary from board to board. Breakfast and lunch programs, for example, might be delivered by an outside agency using accommodation provided by the school. In some smaller and northern boards, Halton added, use of the school is the only way to deliver some of the services. The Ottawa Board noted that provision of services such as breakfast programs is in response to community "need" rather than "demand."

The Central Algoma Board echoed this view, adding that there was little point separating responsibilities into education, health or social services responsibilities, as "the community expects the resident agency with staff to perform these services regardless of the actual mandate." The solution, suggested the Board, would be "to ensure that the board has the resources to provide the services through the schools." The Timiskaming Board also stated that it was doing almost everything on the list but without sufficient or appropriate funding.

The Elgin County Board called for removal of endorsement of JK, the omission of child care, and the reallocation of some of health services funding to education.

CHILD CARE

Dealing specifically with the care of children below school age (below JK), boards were generally unwilling to accept this responsibility.

School boards have "no role" in the provision of such services, said the Dryden Board, observing that child care is not an educational function. The Lambton County Board stated "not day care or child care" and Prescott-Russell added that such care should be "limited to ancillary community service."

Many boards were prepared, however, to accommodate such services provided that appropriate resources were made available. Agreeing that day care was not the role of school boards, the Victoria County Board suggested that schools should include day care facilities which would be rented from the board. The London Board described the school board's role as that of "a partner with other agencies by incorporating space for delivery of child care in board facilities" but with funding from other ministries. The Board stressed that the partnership should provide "coordination and a continuum of learning strategies."

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board agreed that "child care needs to be more integrated with education." The Board felt that school boards wishing to become child care operators should be free to do so, but added that issues such as space requirements and staffing regulations first required review. "Education should not be responsible for the costs but should make sure that the system works to the benefit of the child." The Board also noted a role for the Ministry of Culture and Recreation.

The Ottawa Board also felt that day care space should be available in schools but that boards should not be responsible for subsidies or for operating the programs. Ottawa noted the federal government responsibility in terms of universal day care.

Observing that child care seems to fall under the auspices of community and social services, the Waterloo County Board proposed that school boards continue to work with appropriate ministries, groups, and individuals regarding the utilization of vacant classroom space and the inclusion of child care facilities in new buildings or additions. The Board stressed that boards should be reimbursed for any administrative costs and suggested that legislation should remain permissive allowing for local autonomy with respect to provision of services.

The Hastings County Board felt that boards could encourage the delivery of child care programs by "cooperating with Ministry of Community and Social Services and/or community agencies which are prepared to deliver such services, by providing space where available, and by incorporating plans for child care space in new facilities where funding is provided from outside education." Boards could "influence the location of child care sites to better service parents and coordinate with school services," the Board said.

The Elgin County Board proposed one centre per county or region, possibly for teenage mothers, with transportation provided if necessary. The Halton Board noted that it provides service for parents attending ESL programs and "teen moms attending regular day school." However, the Board stressed that such services should not be mandated - boards should have the flexibility to provide programs where there is greatest need and accommodation is

available. Halton also preferred that the Ministry of Community and Social Services maintain the responsibility and that school boards provide coordination.

The Timiskaming Board suggested that child care should be provided where it was possible "without detriment to school classes" and/or could "tie in with Family Studies at no cost to the board." The Board noted the value of such a service both to single parents seeking to complete their education and to board employees. The Atikokan Board agreed that availability of child care could be "an incentive for teenage mothers, and other mothers, to continue their education." The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board felt that secondary schools were appropriate places to locate child care facilities - "again, with appropriate resources."

Hastings County stressed that school boards should not contribute financially to the establishment of ongoing support for child care programs, while the Durham Board noted that child care is "a separate entity. It should be integrated with education but not funded from the local property tax base."

ADULT EDUCATION

The theme of lifelong learning was carried over into consideration of the role of school boards in the provision of adult education. **Most boards felt that all adults should have access to the education system for credit courses at the OAC level or below.**

"School boards should take an active role in lifelong learning providing elementary, secondary and continuing education opportunities to adults," said the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board. Oxford County supported the concept of lifelong learning "as long as it is fully funded." The Atikokan Board noted that boards have the physical resources to play a vital role in the provision of adult education, but questioned "whether or not we have the human resources to provide teachers."

Stating that "a student is a student", the Northumberland and Newcastle Board called for a review of legislation to ensure that funding does not discriminate on the basis of age.

"All learners, to the extent of their ability, must be given the opportunity to complete their secondary school education," said the London Board. The Board highlighted adult ESL and provision of interest courses in continuing education. The Ottawa Board again noted the right of all learners to seven years of free secondary education, and that this right encompasses "accessible schools, equipment, furniture." Ottawa said it was essential to retain the option to offer continuing education courses. "Many adult learners start with interest courses", said the Board, "and gain confidence to continue."

The Waterloo Country Board agreed that adults have the right to opportunities for lifelong learning, and should have equal access to programs offered by school boards. Such programs should be offered as night school classes, at the work site and in other ways that recognize the needs of the learner.

The West Parry Sound Board noted that the "preparation and motivation of citizens for life-long learning is an admirable goal" but must be "supported by an economic system that can afford it." The Board observed that in smaller communities, the provision of adult education may be a burden on the local taxpayer. However, if space permits, "existing school sites and accommodation should be made available for adult education, recreation facilities, adult training and retraining and child care." Victoria Country suggested that courses should be available to the OAC level on a user pay system.

The Timiskaming Board called for appropriate funding to offer all credit and job-retraining courses to adults, but felt that interest courses in leisure and fitness should be funded by user fees. The Durham Board supported the concept of user fees for general interest courses.

The Bruce County Board believed that adult education "should be assimilated in the daily school operation." Elgin County felt that it should be available either during the school day or in the evening.

The Hastings County Board of Education proposed the following circumstances. Regular programs should be offered where adults have not received secondary school graduation status, have attended secondary schools for fewer than 7 years, and where the principal determines that the adult will benefit from secondary school instruction. With respect to Continuing Education, day programs should be available in support of adults who are upgrading skills; night school programs should have the same requirements as regular day school programs. There should also be basic education opportunities for adults who are not functioning beyond the elementary school skill level and, in the opinion of the secondary school principal, would not benefit from instruction in a secondary school.

Responses were mixed as to whether school boards should have sole responsibility for adult education to the level of secondary school graduation.

The Durham Board said they should, but not necessarily on school sites; courses could be held in locations such as malls or factories. Durham also supported cooperation whereby business and individuals could pass on first-hand experience and seconding external expertise both on school sites and in the workplace through linkage and co-operative programs. The Waterloo County

Board said that adults should also be able to obtain secondary school education through various means including independent study, correspondence and private schools.

The Brant County Board felt that within a well-defined Ministry of Education policy, and according to community needs and available resources, school boards should have the sole responsibility. The Prescott-Russell County Board did not feel that secondary schools could answer all needs, although the Halton Board observed that school boards are the only agencies qualified to deliver secondary school graduation diplomas - and more economically than community colleges. Commenting on the costs of duplicating services, London supported school boards as the sole providers.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt school boards should be responsible, but suggested coordination to determine whether courses taken elsewhere could, if appropriate, be used for credits.

The Elgin County Board said that school boards should be solely responsible, while Victoria County said they should not. Atikokan said boards should remain the "main providers". The Dryden Board suggested that adult education be provided in conjunction with organizations such as community colleges, adult literacy groups and other post secondary institutions.

The Hastings County Board felt that learners who were capable of studies at the secondary school level (as judged by the principal) should have a choice between credit courses at secondary school or equivalency courses at community colleges. Students "unable to benefit from secondary school level instruction, should have available continuing education alternatives or community college upgrading courses." The Board also felt that interest courses should be handled by community colleges and community organizations where possible, not funded by boards of education.

The Timiskaming Board suggested that boards should be responsible for adult education at the local level but that independent studies and correspondence courses could still be available for those for whom a local school site is inaccessible. Timiskaming emphasized the belief that "it is our mandate to provide mandatory education to those many adult learners in our area who have not completed their secondary education. In addition, without access to a broadly based community college in the area, we are also required by the community to pick up job retraining and skills development programs that meet local needs but not Ministry of Education funding. We are doing this in some innovative ways, not always with Ministry blessing and without Ministry funding, as the present system does not facilitate adult learners. This must be a common problem across small school boards in northern Ontario."

The Halton Board said that boards should provide courses for some adults such as continuing education credit courses and ESL, and should have the option to offer interest courses. Halton also stressed the importance of seeking out and obtaining partnerships with local businesses which could lead to retraining in the workplace. Another suggestion was to encourage personnel exchanges in teaching.

West Parry Sound noted that a recent constitutional proposal of the Federal Government indicated transfers to the provinces of additional responsibilities in training and re-training adults. If these changes are enacted, said the Boards "appropriate funding resources must also be transferred."

CORE PROGRAMS

Responding boards were almost unanimous that a core program should be available to all, regardless of factors such as geographic location and local wealth.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board found use of the terms "core" and "mandatory" confusing, stating its belief that there are "basic options that should be available to all."

The Central Algoma Board called for "a common educational experience across the province which reflects the needs of Canadian society and the global economy." Commenting that "the challenge is to determine what should be included," Waterloo County suggested that the core program must support the purpose of school system: to educate students in various academic or cognitive skills and knowledge, in the development of individual and social skills necessary to function occupationally and sociopolitically in society, and to provide them with equality of educational opportunity and the opportunity to develop and achieve. The Board observed that public education is "a shared responsibility and a co-operative process involving the individual, family, community and society. Therefore, the different educational partners should be involved in the process of building the common core program."

Brant County proposed an expansion of what is currently considered a core program, which in the interests of equity must include transportation for students. The Prescott-Russell Board indicated satisfaction "with what is in existence."

Among suggestions from other boards were the following:

- components of language, mathematics, science, history, geography, physical and health education, arts (Middlesex County);
- basics only - English, mathematics, sciences, physical education, French, geography, history, computers (Elgin County);

- basic skills including communications, mathematics, science and vocational subjects (North Shore);
- communication skills, problem solving skills, physical and social well-being (awareness of), technological literacy, computer literacy, numeracy skills, arts, scientific enquiry and environmental responsibility, global awareness (history, geography), Canadian Studies (Durham);
- communications, mathematics, science, health, social sciences, art, music, and life skills (Atikokan).

The Grey County Board cited the Saskatchewan Education draft proposal for a core curriculum that included language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health education, arts education and physical education. Each required area contained the unique knowledge, skills and values considered essential for students at elementary, middle and secondary levels. The proposal also contained "common essential learnings" - "generic skills, processes and values which can be developed and applied in various settings - communication, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, technological literacy, personal and social values and skills, independent learning."

Boards were also in agreement that the core program should be mandated for every school board - "and funded adequately," added the North Shore Board. Quoting from its 'Goals for Students', the Halton Board said that a "core program with local adaptations is the best way to have students 'achieve to the best of their ability, the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to pursue useful and happy lives in an increasingly complex and changing world." The Timiskaming Board called for a "mandated core program for every school system, provided for all learners, including English, mathematics, history, geography, science, and an introduction to computers, music, art, and technological studies. The Board proposed a "core plus, for those with interest and ability."

Waterloo County agreed that core programs should not be "carbon copies." Noting that education is mandatory between 6 and 16 and that the school must assist students to become lifelong learners, the Board added that a core program should be "universally available to children and adults."

Most boards supported this approach. The Prescott-Russell Board felt that each "ability group should have its own core; de-streaming must be preceded by in-service education which will provide the teachers with skills and strategies needed for teaching heterogeneous classes <u>effectively.</u>"

A core program should be available for all students to the end of the "Transition Years" (Grade 9), said the Durham Board. Core content in option subjects should be provided from Grade 10 to OAC. The Victoria County Board felt that the core should not have to apply to exceptional students, and the Halton Board suggested that a different type of core program may be necessary to meet the needs of Adult Basic Education learners than K - 8 pupils as "there are different 'outcomes' for these groups."

As to flexibility beyond the core and what should be included, boards agreed on the whole that they should be able to respond to local needs. Atikokan responded that the core should be available to "all students", but suggested that optional programming could be decentralized through regional offices to suit different needs across the province. The Middlesex County Board suggested that "Ministry guidelines should be developed in order to achieve standards across the province, allowing some flexibility for regional diversity." Brant County observed that "there has to be flexibility if we believe in educating the individual and retaining autonomy."

Above the base level of education, said the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board, the province should support "a full spectrum of adequately funded educational, social, cultural and health programs from which the local board can "pick and choose" in order to ensure that local requirements are met." The London Board agreed that it should be "up to the local board to meet community needs."

The Waterloo County Board agreed that flexibility should be according to local needs, but viewed the major issues as "funding for both core and additional educational programs" and the need for defined roles and responsibilities. Additional programs beyond the core might include latch-key programs, transportation services, summer and year-round schooling, co-operative education, and swim programs.

Other suggestions included:

- enrichment and technical and career-oriented programs with co-operative education by Grade 8 (Elgin County);
- more indepth study of the core subjects, plus additional languages and topics related to local economy or geography (Timiskaming);
- regionally specific subjects (based on the local situation and needs) organized to allow student choices based on interest (Durham).

Victoria County also supported flexibility - "to be determined by community needs and ability to pay." Dryden suggested programs "to be determined at the local level with provincial funding."

Halton commented that additional programs should be dictated by school-based decision-making, stressing that flexibility was necessary whether for Adult Basic Education or ESL, but that never should less than the 'core' be offered. Central Algoma offered an overview that programs must "create a love of learning to enable citizens to face uncertainty, expect constant change and engender the attitudes necessary for co-operation, coordination and teamwork."

DETERMINATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Co-operation, co-ordination and teamwork were also highlighted with respect to determination of the relative responsibilities of the various ministries and agencies in the provision of education, health and social programs and services.

The Wellington Board felt that coordination of services by the Ministries of Education, Health, and Community and Social Services is necessary to prevent costly duplication of service. "This would clarify the service systems' roles and responsibilities and help control long term escalating costs," said the Board. Observing that "other ministries have responsibilities in and for education," the Oxford County Board proposed that these "be clearly defined so that ministries cannot opt out in subsequent years."

Many boards expressed concern with current duplication in service provision. The Northumberland and Newcastle Board noted that "the needs of children must be uppermost in any determination of responsibilities, and thus the entire area of responsibilities and jurisdiction must be reviewed with the intent to disentangle, simplify and develop a coordinated approach to children's services, with clear financial responsibility.

Atikokan looked to the province for improved inter-ministerial strategic planning, procedural cooperation, and appropriate funding support. "Education should continue to play the main role," said the Board, "with ancillary program funding available through other ministries."

The Victoria County Board called for a common set of goals to be agreed upon collectively and towards which the ministries should work collectively. "There should be no overlap of functions." The Board also observed that "boards should not deflect themselves from their primary focus of education." The Halton Board reiterated the importance of coordination, while Dryden urged that a co-operative role should be defined. Prescott-Russell looked for clarification of responsibilities and elimination of overlapping, adding that "where co-operation is essential, there must be mutual respect and sincere consultation."

The London Board supported the concept of a Ministry of Children and Youth to coordinate services. "Social programs and services must be delivered and funded by other ministries and the dollars assigned to education should not be used for this purpose."

The Waterloo County Board noted the "need to redefine the responsibilities of the education system in conjunction with a review of the mandates of the Ministries of Health, Community and Social Services, and Colleges and Universities. "The bottom line is financial responsibility," said the Board. "It is no good for the education system to say it simply will no longer provide a service." The Central Algoma Board maintained that children's services should be provided through boards of education, although specialized services required by children should remain the responsibility of the Ministries of Health and Community and Social Services. "Optimally," said Timiskaming, determination of responsibilities "should be guided by the needs of the child, and delivered by the nearest facility with the required expertise."

LINKAGE PROGRAMS

Most boards shared the view that "linkages should be developed to maximize resources." Linkage programs were viewed not only as valuable in terms of the integrated use of resources, but as essential in terms of future opportunities for students.

"The purpose of linkage is to enhance the roles of education, business, labour and industry without duplicating services," said the London Board, noting the need for a clear definition of the term. In addition to ties with provincial and federal ministries, the board highlighted areas such as skills development business, labour and industry, immigration, and groups including the Canadian Labour Congress and Ontario Federation of Labour.

Linkages should be developed "everywhere," said the Halton Board, "between business and industry, community colleges and boards of education." The Board noted the need for more apprenticeship programs and urged the continuance of school/workplace programs such as SWAP.

Once responsibilities have been determined, said the Northumberland and Newcastle Board, a number of necessary linkages will become apparent. In addition to maintaining current ties with post-secondary institutions and business/employers, the Board noted the "option of a centralized agency coordinating community-based children's services and working directly with each board to assess needs and delivery of services."

To provide students with opportunities to explore career opportunities, boards must continue to build linkage programs with business and industry, said the Bruce County Board, stressing that more cooperation between business/industry and schools is "essential to ensure a more realistic and acceptable entry level of students into actual jobs."

"We must learn how to make the education system less costly and more effective," said the Victoria County Board, suggesting that community groups such as service clubs and seniors' organizations should assist boards with social services.

The Timiskaming Board recommended linkages with various provincial ministries: the Ministry of Health concerning health services, Labour for vocational training, Natural Resources for outdoor education, Environment for environmental studies and plant site requirements, and Community and Social Services regarding student needs related to their mandate. The Board also suggested a link with Employment and Immigration Canada regarding unemployment insurance benefits for job-training for adult students and immigrant needs.

The Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board observed that linkages "would require clearly stated roles and responsibilities, significant interjurisdictional collaboration, linkages between existing ministries or agencies or complete realignment of provincial ministries and agencies and their related roles and responsibilities.

The North Shore Board suggested ties through co-operative education, noting however that ties with satellite campuses of community colleges are often fruitless. "Do not assume," said the Board, " that every community has access to a community college."

The Dryden Board recommended ties between boards and institutions, and boards and service-providing agencies. Elgin County highlighted service industries, hospitality, hi-tech, computers, co-operative education and enrichment possibilities as areas for joint cooperation.

The Waterloo County Board observed that, when funding is insufficient, a "frequently espoused strategy is to integrate services so as to make best use of resources available." The Board highlighted the need to define the roles of ministries and agencies at both local and provincial levels, with co-ordination at the provincial level between the ministries of Health, Community and Social, Colleges and Universities. Waterloo urged the "same kind of linkage at the local level between the education community and groups and agencies involved in program/service delivery."

The Grey County Board envisioned a situation in which "consortia, now existing in many board jurisdictions and coordinating needs and opportunities existent in business, industry and education, will expand to include social service agencies, making better use of available educational and social support dollars, and forcing the provincial government to integrate many existing ministries in a more efficient manner."

Education: The Future Government Partnership

OPSBA has noted that our school system is experiencing change. School boards must give some thought to their future role in the delivery of this service in our community. This is what our members have said to us.

IV EDUCATION: THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

In this chapter, seven options for governance of the public education system were presented for discussion. The Guide outlined certain issues that must first be addressed in order to define the nature of the future provincial/school board relationship. These issues were: the mandate of education; the viability of four types of school board; balancing provincial authority and local autonomy; public participation; local co-ordination and integration of "human services"; diversity, and consultation.

Several boards spoke directly to these issues. Waterloo County queried the affordability of four types of school system, proposing integrated service units for such functions as purchasing, special education resources, accounting, transportation, plant operation and maintenance, and other instructional and non-instructional services.

Grey County maintained that a Foundation Level of education could be offered to all students by one board and one set of elected trustees, using a "Foundation Plus" option to meet denominational need.

Preferring the concept of one body to administer four separate areas, Victoria County observed that one locally elected board could use a number of common facilities, such as gymnasia, library, audio-visual resources, and transportation services. "We can no longer afford the present system - we have to be more self-reliant," said the Board.

Victoria County also commented on difficulties of encouraging public participation and the need for greater public involvement in board decisions. Waterloo County observed that every school needs a public involvement strategy that includes those without children in the system.

Discussing local integration and coordination of education with other community services, Waterloo County observed that this generally means "taking on more responsibilities with the same or fewer resources." The real issue, said the Board, is to establish "clear mandates and functional responsibilities" with close co-operation between service providers at the local level. Victoria County advocated refusal to provide services for which there is no funding provided.

Most public school boards accepted diversity as reality, noting the four types of board with different mandates. Many agreed that school board governance and administrative structures must reflect the diversity across the province.

With reference to consultation, Waterloo County observed that the province is mandated to set policy but that school boards should have the opportunity to participate in its development. Suggesting that municipalities should be included in any consultation process, the Ottawa Board observed that consultation is needed "before and during, not after." All boards agreed on the need for consultation prior to decision making.

Among other issues raised were accountability for both services provided and dollars expended and "political realities in connection with the ability to make any changes, let alone some very significant ones" (Hastings County). The Northumberland and Newcastle Board noted a need to examine "how the public and parents can be better/more informed in order to participate fully." The London Board noted the effect of Federal Government policy.

Agreeing that the matter of governance could not be considered in isolation from interrelated issues, the Task Force on the Funding of Public Education commented that governance issues required in-depth study based upon broad consultation with the various partners in education, and that options could not be addressed adequately within a broad based review.

Key Issues

The key issues most frequently mentioned in relation to boards' abilities to govern education in their communities were:

- **the unclear mandate of education;**
- **inadequate funding;**
- **lack of local control of the budget.**

Boards also commented on community expectations and problems in assessment-poor areas.

Timiskaming cited "access to dollars", noting that a decline in assessment resulting from extended separate school funding, loss of business and industry, and massive unemployment, combined with a budget which is 80 percent labour costs, allows little flexibility to meet local needs.

As one of three boards in its district, the Prescott-Russell Board outlined the problems of a minority board that does not receive minority grants. The Board noted competition for scarce resources, a small scattered student population and resultant high transportation costs, and the difficulty of finding necessary funds for the high percentage of special needs students. As the Board is located in a French-speaking area, it also has to fund a level of French as a Second Language that exceeds Ministry guidelines.

Northern and rural boards commented on significant differences in needs and costs. West Parry Sound cited "supplies, septic systems, roof repairs, snowplowing, heating fuels, lack of public transportation, repairs and services" as more costly due to "climate, lack of skilled tradesmen and remoteness from a major centre." Victoria Country noted that some programs may be inappropriate for rural areas.

The London Board cited provincially mandated programs without full funding, immigration and an increased need for English as a Second Language, French First Language issues, and lack of funding to other agencies which hinders local integration and coordination of education and the delivery of other community services. Combined with inadequate funding, Atikokan found that a limited tax base "prohibits any flexibility in considering or expanding options, opportunities or enrichment programs."

Additional issues identified by the Brant County Board included mandated new programs without consultation, influence of special interest groups, environmental issues, community expectations, taxpayers' "revolt", local integration and coordination of education with other community services, and inconsistency and/or insufficiency of provincial decisions about rules and regulations.

Other issues included public resentment of education costs (Waterloo County) and the lack of power to control continued inflation in staff salaries (West Parry Sound). Acknowledging the possible impact on local autonomy and the role of the trustee, West Parry Sound suggested that the first step towards economic control of educational expenditures should be declaring education an essential service with no provision for withdrawal of services. Provincially appointed arbitrators could have the flexibility to establish salary ranges or benefits corresponding to local living expenses and services. "An element of fairness must prevail," said the Board.

Additional issues identified by the Northumberland and Newcastle Board included the geography of the board (problems related to distance and diversity of needs) and lack of public, including municipal, knowledge of education issues.

THE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP/ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

With respect to the future education partnership, OPSBA proposed a division of roles and responsibilities which allocated legislation and strategic direction to the province, service system management to the school board, and service delivery to the school board or contract agency.

Respondents generally found this model helpful, but highlighted concerns about local autonomy, cost control and the need for co-ordination and co-operation between levels of governments, ministries and service providers.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board suggested that a "clear, commonly held definition of local policy was needed and that a given of the province's accountability and standards should be the ability to require school boards to implement said policies."

Wellington County stressed certain criteria for the governance model. In the interests of local autonomy, it must include elected trustees; it must address the need for coordination in services and funding of "non-basic education" services for children; and it must avoid another level of bureaucracy with implications for cost and delay to the decision-making process. The Ottawa Board also rejected any suggestion of "appointed representation" noting that "the only way to be accountable to the public is to be elected." In addition, the Ottawa Board considered the question of accountability for non-mandatory programs, citing the need for public assurance that its adult population is being properly served.

The London Board stressed that local boards should be "more than delivery agents" and should have "more authority setting local goals, local curriculum, program designs and services." The provincial role, said London, should be "the provision of legislation, strategic direction, resources and funding with consultation with the users and deliverers of the services."

Prescott-Russell suggested the addition , under Legislation and Strategic Direction, of "development of legislation, policies, setting provincial directions, and standards for education and establishing mechanisms for meaningful input and cooperation with its partners" and, under Service System Management, of a sub-phrase, "must be genuine versus pseudo responsibility" and a seventh item, "co-operating with the Ministry in the development of initiatives." Middlesex County suggested inclusion in the model of descriptions of responsibilities as well as broad titles to improve public accountability.

The North Shore Board had concerns about the financing of these responsibilities, stating that some of the "legislated programs" should be returned to the jurisdiction of the province for financial reasons. Lambton County stressed that clarification of the roles of the provincial government and local school boards and of strategic provincial directions would enable boards to plan.

Bruce County called for continued exploration and negotiation of co-operation in governance at all levels, with no further "downloading" of social services to school boards and their schools without appropriate consultation and funding. To preserve local autonomy and reflect local needs, said the Board, provincially mandated programs should include consultation and local flexibility during all phases of implementation .

The real philosophical issue, said the Waterloo County Board, is whether government can accommodate real educational variances and differences in the provision of education services across the province - more decision making power concerning programs at the local level would mean differences in educational opportunities across the province. Waterloo also stressed that the partnership should include community and formal networking with other service providers at the provincial and local level.

AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Most responding boards did not feel they had sufficient authority to be held completely accountable to the public for the delivery of education programs. If trustees are to be accountable for programs, services and costs, said Waterloo County, they must have more authority to make decisions and the province must "own up to its control of funds."

Prescott-Russell called for more input into Ministry decisions and a genuine partnership in education. Noting increased Ministry expectations that have eroded local authority, Dryden proposed increased authority with respect to school system operations and local service delivery to students. Elgin County suggested sufficient authority "to say no to a program when funds are not available."

While the London Board felt that there is sufficient authority, this is "sometimes by omission." The Board suggested a rewrite of the Education Act "in terms that more clearly define this authority and that can be easily understood," and added that boards should have authority to provide programs and services beyond those funded by the province. The consensus of the Northumberland and Newcastle Board was that while boards are held accountable by the public for education expenditures, "boards do not feel they have enough control over the programs to be offered and their delivery." Brant County observed that boards are accountable "only to the amount of authority given."

Many respondents did not feel, that there should be a direct relationship between authority and level of local financing, citing primarily the variation in board wealth across the province.

Atikokan felt there should be "authority and flexibility to establish community related programming" but did not approve a direct relationship between authority and local financing. Such a system would be unworkable given the variation in provincial funding across the province, said Wellington County. "School boards with high grant rates should not have less authority than those with lower rates in making decisions on education." The Board added that more authority must be devolved to local authorities, no matter who pays the bill.

While there is no authority without financial control, observed Prescott-Russell, "the proportion of provincial monies should not be the deciding factor in the autonomy ratio because the local property owner has also paid income tax, sales tax etc."

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Suggestions for promoting community participation in education included advisory committees to enable trustees to remain sensitive to the needs of the electorate, school advisory councils, open consultation in policy formulation, and involvement of parents in programs.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt that accountability could be enhanced by "strengthening the role of a parent/community committee to that of assisting/advising the local school administration in areas such as program/curriculum, school discipline/code of behaviour and policy." The board proposed a variation in the "creation of an elected trustees and children's services group, financed jointly by the province and local ratepayers, with appropriate decision making powers to allocate funds on a needs basis."

Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson proposed that individual citizens accept more responsibility for the operation of the school system, through donations of time, expertise and other resources. The Board suggested the promotion of voluntarism, noting the value of a senior volunteer or successful professional.

RESPONSE TO OPTIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

For discussion purposes, the Guide presented seven governance options:

- the current mix of public, separate and French language school boards;
- local school boards, public, separate and French language with a joint community advisory committee;
- one locally elected school board (confederated);
- provincially appointed school boards or municipal education committees;
- an expanded school board: a local children's services authority;
- a regional health and social services authority and locally elected school boards;
- regional community service boards and local school boards.

In assessing the options, boards indicated that major concerns were, burgeoning bureaucracies and the associated costs.

OPTION 1, THE CURRENT MIX OF PUBLIC, SEPARATE AND FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOL BOARDS

This received considerable support, although several boards were strongly opposed and others acknowledged the need for changes.

This is the only option that could be effective, although it has shortcomings, said the Kenora Board. The Hastings County Board was not prepared to support any other options than the organization currently in place, stating its opposition to any organization that would increase bureaucracy or costs. In addition, said the Hastings County Board, the current system "permits more sense of community identity than would umbrella boards" and "the public needs some stability at time of rapid change in many areas."

Timiskaming found the present locally elected school board the most acceptable option. "It is feared that in any other scenario, the mandate to educate will be further diluted or infringed upon by other interests." The Board noted however that, while the current mix works, certain areas of the education mandate could be delivered more economically through a confederated school board, "examples being transportation, payroll, and some administrative functions." While strongly supportive of the current system, Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson also observed that the confederated option warrants further study.

Ottawa observed that in spite of examples of sharing and cooperation between boards, there is currently a great deal of duplication of service. If this option were retained, cooperation would be essential in areas such as curriculum development, vocational education, professional development, co-operative

education and technical education. The Board raised the possibility of a study on cooperation to involve all boards, and noted that cost savings resulting from any change must be studied before it is recommended.

The Dryden Board felt that this option either does or could meet the criteria for evaluation, although both the Atikokan and Elgin County Boards disagreed. Prescott-Russell was also strongly opposed to the current mix, giving among its reasons difficulty with coordination and integration of services, the investment in governance and structure of education rather than education itself, the danger to equality of education opportunity, increased competition between boards, and fragmenting of society.

The London Board felt this option is neither accountable nor equitable without sufficient infusion of funds. "It does not promote tolerance or partnership," said the Board, "but rather fragments education and creates a duplication of services." Nor does the model address various issues including funding, local coordination and integration of human services, and cost effectiveness. The Northumberland and Newcastle Board said it did not provide for the coordination of children's services.

The current mix is no longer an option, agreed Sault Ste. Marie, citing public confusion over the proliferation of different school boards and duplication in costs and efforts. Only one school 'board' is required, said the Board, structured so as to guarantee that linguistic and religious rights are protected.

OPTION 2: LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS, PUBLIC, SEPARATE AND FRENCH LANGUAGE WITH A JOINT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Perth County Board supported this option as being closest to its current governance structure. The Board described its significant advisory base as extremely useful in acquiring community input.

The Kenora Board, however, felt that joint community advisory committees would be ineffective due to their lack of real power and the divergent interests of their members. Prescott-Russell agreed that an advisory committee has no power, and no legal mandate to make a board operate. Victoria Country also observed that advisory committees are less effective. Brant County commented on their "lack of real power."

"An advisory committee would have no authority or accountability," said the London Board. Recognizing that the option "<u>might</u> assist" coordination, the Board felt nevertheless that it could "create stalemates, further complicate jurisdictional issues, and confuse the public." The prospect that participating boards could delegate some authority in order to ensure effectiveness was greeted with

concern by the Ottawa Board. While the Board was supportive of promoting cooperation and collaboration, it had "no use" for this option.

OPTION 3: ONE LOCALLY ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD (CONFEDERATED)

This option proposed a unified governance and administrative structure responsible for the delivery of all education in the community, with sections for combinations of separate, French-language and public education. Each division would have an educational administrative structure to ensure that the education programs and curriculum reflect their particular interests and constitutional rights.

The Ottawa Board questioned whether one board, but still with guaranteed rights for separate schools, could in fact effect cost savings. The Board suggested a study of possible savings in areas such as administration and administration buildings, computer services, payroll, and transportation.

The Kenora Board felt that acceptance of this option was "unlikely, because of the cherished rights of French and Roman Catholic parents to control of their children's education." Prescott-Russell agreed that separate school boards were unlikely to agree to a model that might dilute their autonomy, and suggested also that this option would lead to an additional level of bureaucracy. "This model would be acceptable," said the Northumberland and Newcastle Board, "if it were achievable without infringing on the Charter Rights of either separate school supporters or language minorities." "In Government partnerships, there should be only one model," said the North Shore Board. "We operate by a locally elected confederated model, representing Public, Separate, French and Native populations, each with its own elected representatives. Not all school boards could accept this model."

This option received support from the Victoria County Board, which stated its preference for one school board with adequate financial resources. The Board felt that sharing of resources "would work to the benefit of all boards, for example, one health nurse, one group to deal with parental abuse, student service workers etc." In addition, said the Board, a confederated board "would provide a loud voice to the ministry." The London Board felt a confederated board would "be more accountable, assist partnership, work towards local accountability and autonomy, and address the equity issue ... duplication of services ... and be a more cost-efficient and effective method of delivering education." Depending upon the provincial share of funding," said London, it may also meet the adequacy issue. The Oxford County Board also supported the concept of one locally elected school board, as did the Brant County Board. Brant County found the greatest merit in this option and Option 5, as both met the criteria and still allowed local autonomy.

Although stating a preference for the current system, Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson felt that this model warranted further study. Similarly, while the Timiskaming Board found the present locally elected school board the most acceptable option, it noted that certain areas of the education mandate could be delivered more economically through a confederated school board.

OPTION 4, PROVINCIALLY APPOINTED SCHOOL BOARDS OR MUNICIPAL EDUCATION COMMITTEES

This received no support. "It is not seen as reflective of the will of the community," said the Kenora Board, while Prescott-Russell observed that the province would be in charge and would merely appoint administrators. The London Board added that "it gives a whole new meaning to patronage." The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt that 100 percent provincial funding was unrealistic and that the model would negate local accountability. Brant County found neither of the structures in this option acceptable.

OPTION 5, AN EXPANDED SCHOOL BOARD: A LOCAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES AUTHORITY

The Sault Ste. Marie Board commented that this option came closest to achieving the congruence necessary in the organizational and governance structure for delivery of childrens' services. The board proposed an alternative model (see General Comments).

The London Board felt this option satisfied most of the criteria, although limitations of current school board structures required that "Option 3 would have to happen first." Prescott-Russell also viewed this option as "something to aim for in the future" but with Option 6 as a transitional stage. The Board suggested that "Children's Services Authority" be modified to read "Children's/Adults' Services Authority", on the basis that such a structure would work only "when and if education services are no longer fragmented among the population."

The Ottawa Board agreed, suggesting substitution of "learners" in place of "children" throughout. Since it contained many aspects that affect adult learners in the system, Ottawa felt it should be possible to use the positive aspects of this option. Noting that two-thirds of adult high school students are on welfare, the Board proposed coordination with the welfare system and "building bridges with other agencies and educational systems - consultation at present is on an ad hoc basis."

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board also felt that this option would most satisfy its principles, especially if the children's services authority were "governed by an umbrella board of trustees from the representative school boards."

While Brant County felt this option satisfied the principles and addressed the issues other than consultation, the Board was concerned as to how it would be financed and administered.

OPTION 6: A REGIONAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY AND LOCALLY ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS

This concept received support from the Wellington County Board, although its ideal scenario would also incorporate a confederated school board. The Board suggested amendment of the Education Act to allow local communities the option of creating a confederated board responsible for delivery of elementary and secondary education in the province, reducing duplication of services and saving costs.

Noting that current funding arrangements do not reflect actual costs to school boards of the provision of services outside basic elementary and secondary education, Wellington County felt that a locally elected Regional Health and Social Services Authority would allow respective needs to be determined and resolved locally. To avoid a further level of bureaucracy, the Board proposed corresponding deployment of staff from ministries concerned.

On the positive side, the London Board noted that this option could provide clarity for the ratepayer and could lead to improved coordinated access to health and welfare services for children and youth. However, it would "reduce the autonomy of local school boards, and proposes yet another level of government which could decrease accountability." In the view of the Northumberland and Newcastle Board, this option would lead to "more centralization and further entanglement." Brant County felt that there were "too many negative implications from an educational viewpoint and that it would be extremely difficult to manage."

Victoria County commented that neither Option 6 nor Option 7 (following) were affordable.

OPTION 7: REGIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE BOARDS AND LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

This was the preferred option for the Dryden Board, who felt it would meet all the criteria for evaluation. There was no other support amongst the responses. Brant County rejected the model, noting that it would "drop school boards down to service delivery agents, with no autonomy and no direct funding." Although the model might assist in coordination of and access to health and social services, the London Board felt the additional level of government would decrease accountability and local autonomy.

The Ottawa Board agreed that the model appeared to suggest additional levels of bureaucracy and suggested that it would be more effective to work together with other educational bodies as opposed to "fighting municipalities for road and sewer funds."

Northumberland and Newcastle said this option was not practical as it assumed 100 percent provincial funding and, like the previous option, did not address "disentanglement".

General comments

In addition to comments on specific options, respondents presented some general views on governance and their implications. The Lanark County Board endorsed the principle that the provincial legislature and the local school board provide adequate control of the educational process by the people, while the Kenora Board expressed the concern that "any expanded form of local or regional governmental organization that might include health or social services could be too unwieldy to be effectively managed."

The Sault Ste. Marie Board proposed an alternative model in which governance of all childrens' services in the community would be the responsibility of one local authority - a Confederated Childrens' Services Board. This authority should be locally elected with responsibility for local planning, system management, and allocation of resources for the total system of childrens' services, including education, child welfare, child and family intervention, child development, community support, young offenders, recreation for children, community health programs. The Confederated Board would be responsible to one provincial body with regional offices to interpret policy and support local authorities. All stakeholders (education, health, community and social services, corrections) should have locally elected representation with support from advisory committees. The education services component should have divisions recognizing and supporting religious and linguistic needs of constituents. The Sault Ste. Marie Board noted that meeting the needs of the child in a more coordinated fashion does not diminish responsibilities for adult and continuing education.

The Task Force on the Funding of Public Education observed that the unique governance system of education in Metropolitan Toronto was established in 1953 to share the combined resources of the entire Metropolitan area to ensure equality of educational opportunity to all children in Metro. Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson stressed that "economies of scale" can still be achieved without imposing formal structures on boards, and that co-operation, understanding and respect could foster sharing of services between boards.

The Ottawa Board discussed a possible regional governance model, observing that "in any change it is better to build on positive common consultation and include gradual improvements." The Board suggested requesting assistance from the province in working out such a model.

Waterloo County cautioned that education must continue to be a priority service with priority focus and not be lost in a blended or integrated model.

Options for Finance

OPSBA presented options and issues as food for thought. The issues raised provided the opportunity for public school boards to assess possible solutions and forward their input to OPSBA. This is what our membership has stated about the future financing of education.

V OPTIONS FOR FINANCE

Prior to consideration of options for funding education, OPSBA identified several issues that should be addressed:

- the rising cost of delivery of education;
- the collective bargaining process;
- sharing of limited funding amongst four education systems;
- equity
- the fairness of the property tax;
- certainty and ability to plan;
- provincial policy directions.

Boards were generally in agreement with these issues and, in addition, identified a number of other considerations.

With respect to the sharing of funding, the Northumberland and Newcastle Board urged encouraging sharing of resources, administrative services, and busing. In terms of equity, the Board noted that "equity is not just a matter of assessment practices... a fundamental reform is need to correct this inequitable position for assessment-poor boards."

As additional issues, the Durham Board mentioned negotiations: Bill 100, the philosophy of 80's concerning consumerism, inability of the bureaucratic system to respond quickly to change, supremacy of individual rights over collective needs, changing parental/ public expectations, parent involvement - shifting of responsibilities in raising children to school boards, changing family structures and political expediency for re-election (at all levels). Durham also commented on the requirement under the Education Act that municipalities submit collected education taxes to Boards of Education on a quarterly basis and called for this process to be addressed to eliminate inequities.

Lambton County proposed investigation of provincial bargaining as a means to lower costs, and added protracted negotiations under Bill 100 and a teacher shortage to the list of issues. The Prescott-Russell Board was concerned with distribution of minority language grants and the high cost of providing education for small schools and boards. The Elgin County Board identified parental rights, roles and responsibilities.

Hastings County added the concepts of "efficiency" and "value for money," observing that programs offered must adhere to what has been agreed as the mandate of education and that boards must determine best mode of delivery.

London proposed inclusion of federal policy directions, down-loading, stability of funding, timing of allocation, and consistency of notification, as well as fiscal year, mandatory programs, educational development charges, and funding capital projects.

Victoria County also suggested the issue of lot levies which it called "regressive and arbitrary" and not reflective of ability to pay. The Board viewed levies as discriminatory to small boards and expressed the concern that boards will not receive a significant contribution from this source.

Referring to the decreased provincial share of education funding, the Task Force on the Funding of Public Education included among provincial funding issues the overall total level of provincial support and the determination and allocation of such support to the respective boards.

School board cost effectiveness was the major issue for the Waterloo County Board which stated that it could not support a submission on financing of education that did not "focus on the need for insisting that cost effectiveness principles be mandated at both the local and provincial levels." The Board added that it "does not believe that additional funding for education should be the focus of any OPSBA brief on finance until current expenditures and programs are rationalized." Waterloo County also raised questions concerning effective delivery and the need to address leadership and structure necessary at the local level. "Does the current governance structure provide the best policy direction? What qualifications, expertise, interests should trustees have? What qualities and expertise are required for administrative leadership? What mix of educational and business leadership should be required from a board's CEO?"

Regarding the fairness of the property tax, one of the issues identified in the Guide, the West Parry Sound Board noted that "Parry Sound youth are educated for employment somewhere else and that the significant local investment in education is a contribution to corporate businesses located in other municipalities." The Board also commented that "the present system of assessing personal real estate ignores the ability to pay of people who live in modest accommodation but enjoy two or more high level incomes whereas seniors on fixed incomes may live in large homes with high tax bills." The Board did not support the idea that boards should collect education taxes directly, as this would increase costs, but suggested exploration of a redesign of municipal tax bills to clearly identify education taxes and the appropriate taxing body.

The Victoria County Board commented that boards should have local autonomy and therefore must pay for it locally. However, recognizing the problems for some taxpayers, the province should assume responsibility for uniform market value assessment. The Board suggested that school boards should not be required to pay market value when purchasing a school site, and also agreed that the expense of a duplicate tax collection service was unacceptable.

KEY ISSUES

Key issues affecting operating finances ranged from inconsistent assessment practices to inadequate expenditure ceilings. In addition, many boards highlighted requirements for social services and funding for separate schools as major factors.

The London Board also mentioned local autonomy, the collective bargaining process, downloading with respect to legislated/ mandated programs, and reductions in capital and transportation funding. Other issues identified by the Board were funding for growth, and for child care facilities in renovated schools, pooling of assessment, lack of funding stability, educational development charges, and timing of allocations.

Lambton County identified mandated programs without appropriate funding, escalating salary costs, aging facilities, increased social services delivered by schools, and the redirection of financial resources to French language and separate school boards. Prescott-Russell included inadequate per pupil ceilings, a small pupil population in a large geographical area, high transportation costs, and the fact that an assessment-poor area must support three boards. Victoria County also mentioned a local assessment base that is largely residential, inconsistent assessment values, and education costs that are beyond the public's ability to pay.

For Brant County, key issues included major reductions in the commercial and industrial tax base as a result of plant closures and/or company bankruptcies, lack of funding for aging infrastructure, lack of coordination between provincial and local agencies in terms of providing services for all learners, duplication of services, and lack of services.

Wellington County identified provincial mandates without assessment of local need or appropriate funding increases, and lack of co-ordination of non-basic education services with other ministries such as Health, Community and Social Services and Labour.

The Dryden Board also mentioned the inadequacy of grant ceilings, collective bargaining, and the impact of expanding provincial regulations and provincial downloading of costs. The Board stressed the importance of geographical location in the cost of goods, services and transportation.

Increased reliance on property tax as a source of funding for programs that are becoming more provincially mandated and regulated was an issue for the Hastings County Board, and the Elgin County Board identified inconsistencies in the grant structure.

The Sault Ste. Marie Board said that too large a proportion of education costs currently falls to the local taxpayer, stressing that whatever model is ultimately selected for governance and finance, must incorporate local accountability and local involvement.

The Waterloo County Board was concerned with the timing of remittance of school taxes collected by municipalities, which it needs at least semi-monthly. The Board also raised the issue of deficits, questioning why one board should be permitted to incur a deficit yet set a mill rate lower than a contiguous board.

As a small Northern board with small schools, Atikokan identified a number of financial constraints and costs that are not met by the current grant structure. These included significant costs of special education programs, unfunded liabilities related to an aging staff, such as early retirement gratuities, professional development, and hiring additional staff. The Board noted that despite massive expenditures on microcomputers, no funds have been provided to hire "someone on site to co-ordinate all the software available, train staff, and maintain programs and hardware."

The Durham Board of Education listed mandated programs (e.g., Special Education), class size, aging physical plant, capital growth, changing social needs (social worker), transportation, salary settlements (pay equity), reduction in provincial share of funding, staff development programs, changing demographics (ESL), and Bill 30 (separate school funding).

Among issues identified by the Northumberland and Newcastle Board were the geography of the jurisdiction and resulting problems related to the diversity of the tax base and transportation, pressures of collective bargaining, lack of adequate family and health services, comparisons with the extent of services provided in the Greater Toronto Area, and the impact of mandated programs and other provincial and federal legislation.

RESPONSES TO OPTIONS:

OPERATING FUNDING

The Guide presented seven funding options. The models were presented to stimulate discussion, not as specific proposals for reform.

OPTION 1: NEW EXPENDITURE CEILINGS FOR THE CURRENT GENERAL LEGISLATIVE GRANT PROGRAM

This was the preferred option for the Wellington County Board which also noted that increasing reliance on property tax creates inequities which must be examined. The Timiskaming Board supported the concept of a realistic level for expenditure ceilings.
The Kenora Board called for the revision of provincial/local shares if the current funding model is retained. The Board noted that the obvious mechanism would be an increase in per pupil ceilings, but not easy to accomplish given provincial financial constraints. Kenora also considered the feasibility of abolishing the ceilings, the component of the funding model that creates unfairness between assessment-rich and poor boards. All boards would then be funded at a grant rate reflecting their assessment wealth. To distribute the total provincial funding available, grant rates could be adjusted based on preliminary budget submissions from boards.

Although expressing firm support for the current funding model, the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board called on the province to, among other things, increase provincial funding, including sufficient funds for new social policies and initiatives, and to reassess the equity of the situations of small northern boards. The Board also asked the province to introduce a financial planning system which would permit at least five-year planning, to consider a change in the operating year of boards, and to ensure that compensation for major policy shifts such as pooling of assessment or extended funding is sufficient to maintain the viability of the public education system.

The Durham Board acknowledged that this option would provide property tax relief but felt it would be too restrictive and would permit too much provincial control. Durham did not feel that the per pupil grant is practical as it allows no flexibility and requires annual updating.

The London Board was concerned that the mandate referred only to elementary and secondary education, and asked for definition of the term "control on board expenditures." The Board felt this was neither an effective nor equitable option. Brant County also found the mandate too narrow, but felt it could support this option with a broader definition that went beyond elementary and secondary education.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt that the current provincial economic climate would negate any potential advantages of this option. The Board also expressed concern about the effect of a narrow mandate not only on lifelong learning but on children below school age and additional psychological and social services provided by boards, and described this option as "just another band-aid approach to education funding."

OPTION 2: 60 PERCENT PROVINCIAL FUNDING OF EDUCATION PLUS PROGRAM GRANTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

This option was favoured by Victoria County and was the second choice of the North Shore Board of Education. The Timiskaming Board observed that it would helpful if combined with realistic expenditure ceilings. "Program specific grants in adult education would be beneficial to any board seriously trying to meet the needs of adult learners. The mandate and regulations must be responsive to the different hours and needs of adults."

The Durham Board felt that although this option would add responsibility in the public eye and allow choice, there would be confusion regarding responsibilities - "It muddies the waters - who is doing what?" In addition, there would be pressure to provide services even if the government were unable to provide sufficient funds. Its major strength would lie in co-operation from other ministries. Durham suggested an Option 2A with 60 percent provincial funding for education and 100 percent for adult education/child care - "then there would be no cost for 'opting in'."

Both the London and Ottawa Boards observed that it was impractical at this time to expect the province to assume 60 percent of educational expenditures. London noted also that adult education should be funded on a year-round basis on a level consistent with elementary and secondary schools, and that child care should be operated by other community agencies. "This option would negatively impact on lifelong learning." The Brant County Board felt this option addressed neither equity, adequacy nor accessibility.

Although this option could reflect true program costs more realistically, the Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt it only partially addressed equitable delivery of child care services and adult education, suggesting that they could be permissive programs. Nor did it address the responsibility for social programs, said the Board. "Unless there was total provincial pooling of the commercial and industrial tax base, educational opportunity would be cut to very basic programs in industrial poor rural areas."

OPTION 3: 100 PERCENT PROVINCIAL FUNDING OF EDUCATION AND RELATED PROGRAMS

Although the majority of the Kenora Board of Education did not support this option, the Board commented on its possible feasibility if municipalities were to take sole control of local property taxation and give up most or all provincial grants - provincial grant money could then be redirected to elementary and secondary education. Depending on the total funds involved, it might be necessary to pool commercial and industrial taxes

provincially, and to split it between municipalities and school boards. The advantage is the "perceived strong link between property taxes paid and municipal services received", whereas "ratepayers do not seem to perceive a similar link between property taxes paid and education services received." The Kenora Board questioned, however, whether locally elected school boards would still be justified, and in their present capacity.

The Durham Board found 100 percent provincial funding excessive, implying too much provincial control and loss of local autonomy. While it addresses the issue of accountability, it does not address individual needs of boards. Durham also raised the question "Where will the province get the money? The Northumberland and Newcastle Board echoed these concerns, stating that this option "flies in the face of community empowerment and democratic principles." The loss of local autonomy was equally unacceptable to the London Board. Brant County dismissed this option as failing to meet any of the principles other than that of the mandate.

OPTION 4: 100 PERCENT PROVINCIAL FUNDING BY POOLING PROPERTY ASSESSMENT; NEW EDUCATION PER PUPIL GRANT

Regarding Options 3 and 4, the Timiskaming Board commented that "total funding by the province by its very nature destroys local control and autonomy and is therefore not acceptable."

The Durham Board commented on the similarity of this option to the British Columbia model for education finance - "90% funded by province, remaining 10% from residential property tax, as permitted by local referendum. Although this has the advantage of local accountability and involvement, it has the distinct disadvantage of a "feast or famine" situation. There is the strong possibility of the municipality moving in to fill the space vacated by education. The impact of tax levels on investment in the province must always be considered."

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt this option would address inequities in the assessment base, "but only if accompanied by assessment reform and an 'equitable' grant redistribution formula." The Board was concerned that it did not include adult education, child care and other social programs, commenting that, like the previous option, "it ignores the value of local initiative and could promote uniformity and consistency at the expense of local diversity and community needs." Observing that it would not be possible to have one fair mill rate across the province, Brant County agreed that the model addressed equity, but noted a severe reduction in local autonomy.

The London Board found this option "neither manageable nor accountable", noting that "pooling of commercial and industrial assessment could be used by the province for purposes other than education." The Ottawa Board also rejected provincial pooling of assessment.

OPTION 5: FUNDING BY A NEW INCOME TAX; NEW EDUCATION PER PUPIL GRANT; COST-SHARED PROGRAM GRANTS

Prescott-Russell saw possibilities in this option although "the province would have to deal with the matter of instituting a new income tax and there must still be a mechanism to provide equality of per pupil assessment across the province."

Combined with realistic ceilings, this option appeared most satisfactory to the Northumberland and Newcastle Board. In the Board's view, it would take pressure off the residential property tax base and the new income tax would be offset for most taxpayers by a tax credit. The Board also felt that this option could eventually "promote decentralization of provincial services and a subsequent disentanglement."

Timiskaming found it interesting but feared that "the personal income tax for education would simply become another tax and inequities would continue." Commenting on the narrow definition of education, the London Board reiterated its concerns about the negative impact on lifelong learning and added that while the income tax provision could provide more equity for taxpayers, the option seemed "complicated and could trigger increased taxpayer resentment."

Among the positive aspects, the Durham Board noted that the province would define the mandate and equate it to the true cost per pupil, and a new tax credit system would be based on ability to pay. However, negative aspects included the facts that 40% of costs would still come from property tax, boards would become sole custodians for both education and social needs, and that currently, there is no tolerance for a new income tax.

Brant County also observed that being restricted by income tax "which may not mean more revenue . . will restrict the ability to plan for the future of education."

OPTION 6: PROVINCIAL FUNDING OF MANDATORY EDUCATION; BLOCK GRANT FOR EDUCATION "SUPPORT" SERVICES

This option was greeted more favourably than any other.

Calling it "the most appropriate long term model," the Dryden Board observed that this option would guarantee provincial funding for mandatory programs and provide grant funding for optional programs at a realistic level. Shared funding for additional optional services using a block grant would allow boards and other agencies to provide a more coordinated and integrated approach to service provision. Although cost sharing would have to recognize local ability to pay to ensure equal ability of boards to offer optional programs, Dryden noted that the "reduction in local property tax levies would provide some relief to the concern about the fairness of property taxes." A difficulty identified by the Board would be the "requirement for identification of mandatory programs and related costs (with recognition of local cost differentials)" and the "necessity to put in place appropriate structures for integration of planning and delivery of those optional services selected."

Timiskaming also commented on the difficulty in determining what should be included in foundation programs. Durham highlighted positive points such as a defined mandate and the ability to respond more quickly to local needs, but also acknowledged that certain fundamental basic needs may have to be ignored due to lack of ability to pay. The Northumberland and Newcastle Board observed that this option would create "a new 'Pandora's Box'." While it would clearly define financial accountability, the Board felt that "the increased provincial contribution could be accompanied by expenditure control mechanisms which would prove too restrictive for school boards."

On the whole, however, boards found considerable merit in this option. The North Shore Board responded with a "definite yes," giving Option 2 as its second choice. The Sault Ste. Marie Board said it came "closest to addressing the shortcomings of the current situation" and that the suggested 75%/25% provincial/local funding appeared reasonable, provided the tax effort were equalized across the province to reflect the ability of the local community to pay. The Oxford County Board also favoured this option.

The London Board supported this option insofar as it would provide clear responsibility for funding, and boards would be able to "exceed the eligible costs on mandated programs where local circumstances required." However, the Board noted, "if the government cannot meet a 60 percent level of funding, how can it attain a 75 percent level?"

The Prescott-Russell Board observed the need for equity in all areas in per pupil assessment which can be achieved "by the government taking over taxes from commercial, industrial and business assessment." The Board added that the model seemed "to provide a framework in which all our concerns could be addressed." The Middlesex County Board also felt that this option warranted further discussion and consideration. Brant County agreed it had merit, but felt it was not stated clearly enough.

OPTION 7: EDUCATION VOUCHERS: USER FEES

Although the Victoria County Board commented that competition would improve quality, there was little interest in and no real support for this option. The Timiskaming Board rejected it on the basis that it would further fracture the education system, while the Middlesex County Board did not support either any form of voucher system or total provincial funding.
The Brant County Board saw some merit in terms of accountability and quality of program, but felt this option did not meet the mandate of public education and the principles of equity and partnership. In addition, the Board cited costs of administration and transportation and inefficient use of personnel and resources.

Lambton County suggested that a voucher system would prevent public boards from offering an equitable system and that fees seem to be discriminatory. London added that the option "compromises the spirit of equity and tolerance, and increases the potential for discrimination." The Northumberland and Newcastle Board said the model "negates long term strategic planning and promotes open competition and the design of an education system by consumer choice, making marketing the product as important as the product itself." In addition, said the Board, "it further isolates the non-parent from input into school policies, as well as violating the principle of equal opportunity."

RESPONSE TO OPTIONS:

CAPITAL FUNDING

The Guide put forward the mandate of education, changing priorities, adequacy, legislative inconsistencies and multi-purpose school sites as issues related to capital funding. In reference to multi-purpose school sites, the Northumberland and Newcastle Board had reservations about the consolidation of children's activities at one institution as "it may have a negative impact for some children and might also diminish the concept of 'a special place' for learning."

Issues put forward by respondents included:

- the need to equalize per pupil assessment across the province (perhaps by government taking over commercial, industrial and business school taxes); the need to recognize school needs in less dense areas; fragmentation of the system and of educational resources (Prescott-Russell)

- discrepancy between Ministry funded criteria for rated capacity and operational capacity; need to change legislation to allow boards to enter into special funding arrangements with developers for the provision of facilities; need for flexibility to encourage innovation, lease arrangements, shared community facilities etc.; need for clarification of role of development charges (Victoria County)

- aging of schools, rapid growth expanding boards, renovation funding, (multi-purpose) educational facilities (London)

Before addressing specifics, suggested the Waterloo County Board, issues concerning provision of school and related facilities should be resolved. The Board called on the province to provide a clear statement of its expectations of the respective roles of boards and the Ministry of Education for the provision of school accommodation. The Board also referred to methods used to determine, prioritize and acknowledge capital needs, noting that "in spite of unfulfilled needs, excellent education is still provided - so how important are the needs?"

Waterloo also identified the need to re-examine segregating new capital from renovation and replacement needs. "Capital needs for education should not be compartmentalized in this way - education capital funding requirements, whether to provide additional pupil places for developing needs, or to preserve pupil spaces for ongoing needs, are two faces of the same coin." The Board urged that the rate of grant for additional school accommodation be equal to the grant rate for renovations and replacements for those boards that have not opted to impose development charges.

Commenting on the need for funding for building maintenance and revitalization, the Atikokan Board observed that most of its buildings are now more than 35 years old. The Dryden Board proposed a higher profile for funding for renovations and upgrading of facilities. Durham mentioned the use of other facilities such as commercial space, and the year-round use of facilities (a modified school year).

CAPITAL OPTION 1: A REVISED CAPITAL GRANT PLAN

The Prescott-Russell County Board of Education selected this option but identified several concerns to be addressed. These included: the allocation process and criteria for funding school renovations; Ministry funding criteria of rated capacity and operational capacity; clarification of the role of development charges; child care capital - appropriate responsibility and cost-sharing; application of the ROE criteria and the development of a new mechanism for measuring ability to pay.

Stating support for the concept of long-term planning and the need for local flexibility and innovation, the Wellington County Board felt it could best be accomplished through this option. The North Shore Board felt this option would best serve its interests also.

The Hastings County Board also recommended retention of the existing capital grant plan, but with extensive revisions within both the plan and the Ministry of Education. The Board proposed reviews of Ministry rated capacity, the allocation process and criteria for funding, and clarification of the role of development charges. To provide additional funds, Hastings County advocated flexibility for boards to pursue alternative means of financing. These could include lease or lease-back arrangements, take-back mortgages and developer agreements.

Under this more realistic option, said the Durham Board, benefits would include fewer portables, less transportation and less need for more expensive short-term additions. Without additional funding, however, there could be no resolution of existing problems.

Agreeing that additional funds were crucial, the Northumberland and Newcastle Board viewed the benefits of this option as including: a match between rated and operational capacity, a streamlined approval process and more meaningful allocation process, means of dealing with funding for child care facilities, and establishment of provincial accountability.

The London Board observed the need for a more realistic capital grant plan in terms of class size and rated capacity, noting that modern-day learning requires different configurations.

Brant County viewed this option as "reasonable and the most practical." The Board noted, however, that the whole funding structure must be revised to reflect current needs, including aging infrastructure and provision of child care facilities in existing buildings.

CAPITAL OPTION 2: A BLOCK CAPITAL GRANT

The Durham Board preferred the concept of a block capital grant. In its view, this option would allow planning, co-operation, a co-ordinated approach, and flexibility for accommodation. Noting that both growth-related and non-growth related issues must be addressed, the Board felt it was a practical option if weighted for high growth, age of existing facilities, costs of land, public/separate mandate.''

"This option could be supported if the criteria for allocation included factoring for growth, square footage depending on type of structure and age of buildings, and is not based on simple per pupil grants," said the London Board. In the Board's view, "if boards are to be more involved in providing support services, it is essential that the funds flow to provide the capital and equipment cost and these funds not be taken from the education dollar." The London Board observed, however, that although this option seemed to satisfy the principles identified, it did not "address the problem that the province does not have funds available."

The Dryden Board preferred this option, saying it would allow local decisions regarding use of funds and should improve efficiency of service delivery. Hastings County found it interesting in that better control and planning would be possible, but stressed that the method of allocating funds was crucial as to whether it would prove practical. The Wellington County Board suggested that if confederated boards were created, consideration could be given to this option, allowing boards to make creative use of limited funds.

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board felt this option would lend itself to the concept of multi-purpose school sites. "The fact that we serve both a county and a town, which is part of another regional government, definitely complicates this issue," said the Board. Among other concerns was the possibility that the provincial commitment to providing adequate funding might be reduced.

CAPITAL OPTION 3: PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Durham viewed this option as a break from traditional funding practices which might permit a more immediate response to needs. However, while it would link development and need for schools in the same area, it would require boards to relinquish some autonomy. Durham also noted that this option did not address issues of upgrading facilities or renovation, would require more work, involve complex agreements, and the private sector would have to pass on its costs. Another possible result would be further provincial withdrawal from capital funding.

The London Board also felt that this option should be permitted, recognizing that "private sector contributions are dependent on income tax, opportunities for capital cost allowance and other write-offs." The Board felt this model "would not solve existing building problems, but would help solve the growth problems."

The Northumberland and Newcastle Board agreed that this option could assist growth boards but said it would not assist schools in need of maintenance or renovation funding. The Board observed that "if the confusion, upheaval, and political maneuverings that have occurred around the developmental charges are any indication, this option has the potential to die of old age before it sees the light of day."

OTHER COMMENTS

Operating

Several boards did not address specific options, but provided comments and suggestions for other possible operating and/or capital funding models and practices.

The Foundation/Foundation Plus model was proposed by the Grey County Board. The Foundation level would be costed on a total program basis, the Foundation Plus on a program cost basis. The model would address specific differences in board circumstances - size, geographic location, economic and demographic factors, foundation program differentials, e.g. French language - as now, through board and program specific grants.

A. Foundation Level Expenditure

- funded 100% by province or shared with property tax with high percentage of provincial funding
- ceiling concept as long as components of ceilings accurately costed and made known to boards
- commitment by province to maintain funding integrity of Foundation level, recognizing changes in content, requirements, costs

B. Foundation Plus

- funding on shared basis such as provincial/property tax
- funding according to options chosen
- keep cost levels current as for Foundation level

C. Program Beyond Foundation Level

- local option
- local cost

The design of this funding model would address the principles of equal access to resources, participation and accountability. Boards would participate in developing the components of Foundation and Foundation Plus and the costing model; a joint province/board mechanism would establish the new model.

Equal access to resources to support program beyond these levels could be achieved either by pooling commercial assessment or by requiring boards to raise necessary funds on residential and farm assessment. "A funding model in which the integrity of the funding model is maintained, program expectations are defined, equal access to resources is assured, and a two tier mill rate system is employed, will allow the local ratepayer to better assess financial accountability. A Provincial market value or standard value assessment system will allow mill rates to be compared across the Province and further enhance financial accountability."

The Lambton County Board suggested that funding be on a per pupil basis, with a base level program (needs definition) funded at 100% by the province. Funding for non-mandatory approved recognized programs would be shared funding, while local property/income tax would be raised for discretionary programs and a higher level of programming. "This will make trustees more accountable if they are providing the 'extra' programs."

The Oxford County Board stressed the following points: the financing option that is ultimately developed must assure and enhance local autonomy; it must give local boards some "ownership" in the system; and local taxes should support to some degree discretionary options.

The Hastings County Board selected concepts from options 1,2 and 3 to form an eighth operating funding option. This would incorporate new expenditure ceilings based on a core curriculum, with 60% funding from province's consolidated revenue fund and 40% from property taxes. Provincial bargaining on behalf of all school boards would permit better provincial control of education costs. The Board stressed that if the province were to fund 75% of salary and benefit costs of boards, this would represent about 60% of total costs (80% X 75% = 60%).

The Timiskaming Board proposed a funding model that would provide 100% funding for every board for the basic requirements of essential mandated items (administration, supervisory services, elected board) plus a GLG structure to cover 60% or more of the true cost of education per student (revised ceilings) and additional funding from other ministries for those programs delivered in the school system that are within their mandates.

Capital

The Lanark County Board presented proposals for amendments to the current methods of raising and distributing funds:

1. That the assessment of properties for the purpose of education taxation be done on a market value basis and be revised annually.
2. That commercial and industrial assessment be pooled on a province-wide basis.
3. That provincial grants to school boards be increased at the same rate as the general increase in the costs of providing elementary education.
4. That programs in support of education such as child care, family support programs, and health support programs, be funded 100% by the province.

Commenting on unfairness of capital funding allocations other than pupil places to non-growth boards, the Lambton County Board proposed that boards be able to accrue capital funds provided by the Ministry on a per-pupil basis based on a board's capital investment in its buildings, such as the Board/Ministry equity reserve.

Capital facilities should be a provincial priority and responsibility, as investments rather than expenditures, stated the Waterloo County Board. The Board did not feel that the Block Grant proposal would lead to effective prioritization of need on a provincial basis, nor that boards should rely on the private sector. It agreed, however, that boards should have flexibility to access private capital where it makes economic sense over the long term and that accommodation needs should be projected into the future to design viable alternatives into school buildings for when school accommodation needs decline.
For major maintenance, renovation, and/or replacement needs, Waterloo County suggested a funding mechanism allowing boards to set aside funds in a "buildings reserve." This should be a "recognized charge against operating budget and fully grantable." The Capital Grant Plan should be updated and integrated with other directives and curriculum guidelines to ensure consistency, and reviewed annually. In addition, the Board suggested exploration of the implications of the province integrating other social capital needs with school requirements and funding the entire cost of new school construction. Boards would be responsible for upkeep and maintenance, with significant costs financed through the "buildings reserve." The question of financing non-traditional facilities mandated by province such as child care, would not arise.

The West Parry Sound Board noted that the provision of additional classroom accommodation is not a serious concern in Parry Sound as pupil enrolment remains constant. However, "replacement and renovation of existing plant is a major problem." The Board

suggested that capital costs of renovations and upgrading and replacement of obsolete science and technology equipment should be paid for by grants and current funds to avoid high interest charges. Legislation to permit school boards to establish depreciation accounts should be considered.

Regarding funding for capital projects, Lanark County Board proposed:

1. That classroom loading criteria be revised to reflect actual practice by school boards.
2. That the provincial average rate of grant be returned to 75% for those boards that do not collect levies under the Development Charges Act.

The Metropolitan Toronto Task Force spoke of the need to review and resolve funding of capital needs, especially school consolidation, changing program needs, and the growing need to renovate, upgrade and replace outdated accommodation. "There are approximately 4,700 schools in the province of Ontario. An average replacement life of 50 years requires sufficient funds to replace almost 100 schools per year. Such a target is not within reach under the present Capital Grant Plan."

Stressing the need for impact analyses of proposed funding options prior to developing responses, the Task Force called for analyses of each OPSBA option to determine implications of pooling of commercial and industrial assessment, the impact on the local ratepayer, and the maintenance of a quality educational program designed to meet local needs. The Task Force also cautioned against the assumption that pooling of industrial and commercial assessment affects Metro only - "in the long run all boards will have fewer available resources and, as a result, the quality of education will deteriorate from the present level."

Current governance and funding models are effective enough to warrant continuation, said the Kenora Board. "Improvements could be made to improve the clarity of the funding model, but it will likely have to remain complex in order to guarantee fairness to ratepayers and equality of educational opportunity for pupils."

The Wellington County Board expressed the hope that the province "will not be satisfied with proposals resulting in cosmetic tinkering to finance models without resolving the fundamental issues surrounding the responsibilities of boards of education."

APPENDIX 1

RESPONSES RECEIVED

Atikokan Board of Education
Brant County Board of Education
Bruce County Board of Education
Carleton Board of Education
Central Algoma Board of Education
Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board of Education (Conseil d'education)
Dryden Board of Education
Durham Board of Education
Elgin County Board of Education
Essex County Board of Education
Grey County Board of Education
Halton Board of Education
Hastings County Board of Education
Kenora Board of Education
Lambton County Board of Education
Lanark County Board of Education
London Board of Education
Task Force on the Funding of Public Education
(The Public School Boards of Metropolitan Toronto)
Middlesex County Board of Education
North Shore Board of Education (Le Conseil scolaire de la rive nord)
Northumberland and Newcastle Board of Education
Ottawa Board of Education
Oxford County Board of Education
Perth County Board of Education
Prescott-Russell Board of Education/Conseil de l'education
Sault Ste. Marie Board of Education
Timiskaming Board of Education
Victoria County Board of Education
Waterloo County Board of Education
Wellington County Board of Education
West Parry Sound Board of Education